NEA Today
The Magazine of the National Education Association
May 2002

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English Lessons

Winning the battle for English-language learners.

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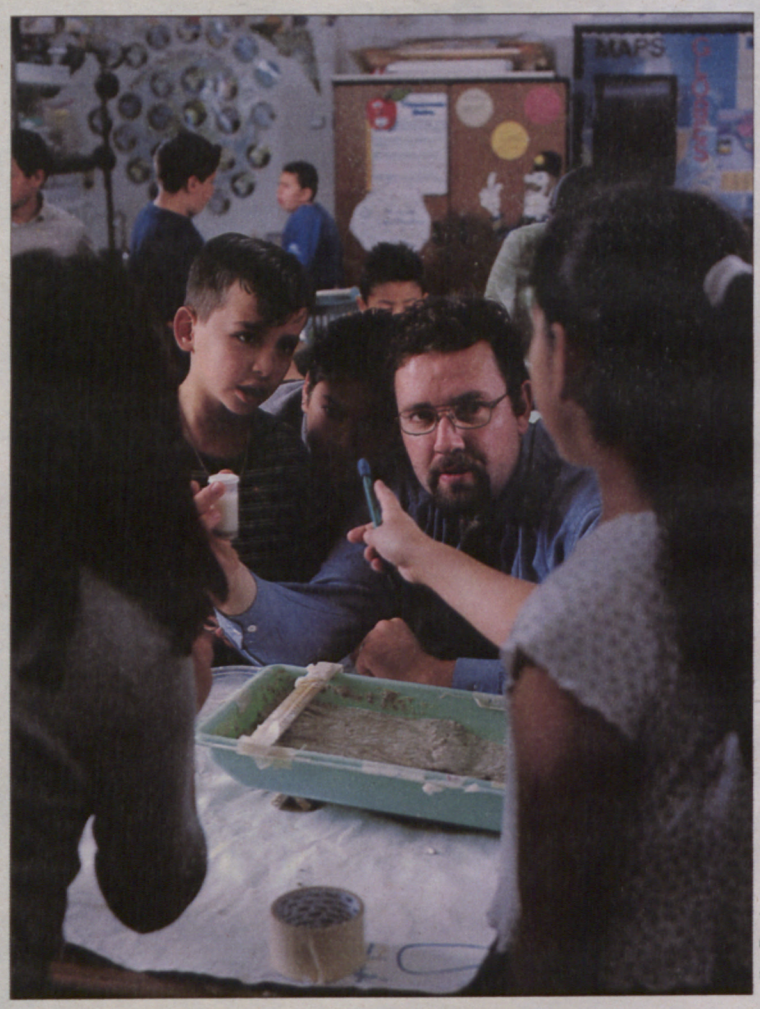

Jim Decker

English Lessons

In eight years, Nevada teacher Theo Small has seen his class population change from majority English-speaking to almost 100 percent non-English-speaking. See how he and others face challenges they were never prepared for—and how high-stakes testing will translate into even more pressure.

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Letters

THE NEW "VOC ED"

While I was thrilled to finally see an article on career and technical education, alias vocational education (Cover, April), I was discouraged at the appeal to college-bound, high-academically achieving students. If you have been a teacher as I have for 14 years, you know not all kids will go to college, and shouldn't. We need mechanics, welders, etc., and should be preparing those students for a viable career upon high school graduation. We should even begin in middle school, where the highest apathy exists. Please don't justify CTE's existence by focusing on how it will benefit the already college-bound.

Sandy Mishodek
Running Springs, California

Amen to "Beyond the 'V' Word." It may not be enough to run a quality, academically oriented, vocational program and place students in good paying jobs. Getting school officials to buy into the idea for the long term will be key. My automotive mechanics program was closed 10 years ago because school officials felt we were spending too much money on too few students. K-12 administrators don't seem to appreciate that students who leave high school with the skills for a fulfilling career ultimately save money—for the students, their families, and the educational system, too.

Donn Fishburn
Scotts Valley, California

AIR QUALITY NIGHTMARE

After reading "'Dream' Jobs Turn to Nightmares" (April), I commend Connecticut NEA members for their efforts to pass indoor air quality legislation. Perhaps someday Illinois can follow their example.

Two classrooms in my school smelled sewer gas for most of last year. The teachers and students complained of multiple symptoms, but no one listened until one day the exposure was high enough to cause breathing problems, eye irritation, and dizziness. Health problems persisted in the following days and months. However, it quickly became evident that no laws had been broken because Illinois has no law regulating air quality. Where is the accountability here? Aren't local school boards and county and state agencies responsible for ensuring teachers and children are safe in their school environments?

Forge ahead Connecticut, and may other states follow your lead.

Nancy Thompson
Newark, Illinois

Our school has rooms like those profiled by the Connecticut educators—full of mold, with damp walls and ceiling and poor ventilation. And I'm not talking about a decaying inner city school; this is in the outer suburbs of Boston!

Teachers young and old have experienced pulmonary problems. I developed an incurable lung ailment that became a big factor in my retirement. Every effort must be made to deal with "sick building" syndrome. It affects so many.

Joseph Chamberlain
Lakeville, Massachusetts

THE BLAME GAME

The article, "A Tough Law Deserves Tough Questions" (April), shows once again that the "blame game" is real and chasing down the foothills, hot on the trail of the classroom teacher.

The new ESEA will require teachers to continually be tested, assessed, and evaluated when students don't reach goal performance. I am not against the state's definition of a "highly qualified" teacher. My disagreement is with the federal law's takeover of schools and firing of teachers who do not reach the goals outlined when students fail state standardized tests.

Students may end up with teachers who are "highly qualified," but they will also have fewer teachers and more federally run schools with substitutes who are neither trained nor qualified. Seems to me that the "assessment hounds" have picked up the fresh scent of the wrong hunting game.

Lori A. Myles
Hephzibah, Georgia

RUNNING ON FUMES

I just finished reading the article, "The Future of IDEA" (Inside Scoop, April). I hope the changes that the NEA is working for make it into the next Individuals with Disabilities Act. If they don't, the already serious shortage of special education teachers is going to get much worse.

I am an elementary special education teacher drowning in paperwork. I'm called upon to make impossible schedules work while trying to individualize instruction for 17 students in three grades and six separate classrooms. I am so close to burnout that I can feel the flames. After 10 years in the trenches, I am almost ready to give it up and head for a less stressful line of work.

Thanks to the NEA for what you are doing. I plan to make the Illinois senators and members of Congress hear my voice and what it is like for me and thousands of others.

Laureen Allison
East Peoria, Illinois

ASSESSING ASSESSMENT

The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills is an example of how an assessment system can cause more harm than good ("Put to the Test...in Texas," March). Texas' single score assessments reportedly have resulted in low graduation rates, rising dropout rates, lower grade-to-grade promotion rates, elaborate ruses by principals to keep from testing low-performing students, and more emphasis on test practice than on higher order thinking skills.

We can learn from Texas' mistakes. The ESEA calls for using "multiple measures" to rate students or schools. At a minimum, states should use a "multiple assessment" system in which a low test score can be offset by a positive showing in other areas that include grades, portfolios or other demonstrations of a student's work, and even teacher recommendations.

George Sheridan
Garden Valley, California

Saying you can improve education by assessment is similar to saying you can improve the flavor of ground beef by weighing it on a more accurate scale. It won't happen. Who decides what is improved anyway? Will education be improved if all students are polite and never pollute the earth? Is education improved if students can answer every true/false question correctly. Who even decides what's important enough to ask?

Nancy Smith
Denver, Colorado

AH, BUT WHAT TO WEAR?

For the past five years I have scoured the professional literature, and so far I have yet to find one good piece of scientific evidence to support school uniforms (Debate, April). The best piece of real science on the issue comes from The *Journal of Education Research* (Sept./Oct. 1998), which concludes that uniforms do not work.

But Morse-McNeely's argument really appears to be more about conformity than uniforms. Existentially she may be correct when she says, "the only real freedom is freedom of thought," but she ignores what dictators and the military have known for generations: that if you can force physical conformity, you can achieve thought conformity, too. She also ignores the First Amendment's right to free speech. What you wear on any given day is an active and visual expression. It is symbolic speech in its purest form.

The real message that school uniforms sends: We will teach you about your rights and freedoms but we will not allow you to exercise them.

K.E. Cunningham
Los Angeles, California

Karen Lee

I spent 12 years in uniforms—in one of those parochial schools that Dave Oland talked about when he asked, "Do we choose to run our public schools in the manner of prisons, boot camps, and parochial schools?"

I am offended by the lumping of prisoners with children who go to private, usually religious schools. Growing up, I was very proud to wear my school uniform. We felt a sense of belonging to a group, of being included. Back in those days, my family had very little money, but with those uniforms, no one could tell! We all looked equal and that helped raise school spirit tremendously.

Mary Hinman
Puyallup, Washington

Pat Morse Mc-Neely was right on with her view supporting uniforms in school. School is indeed a place for learning and conformity, not showing off. Discipline in public schools is a problem, let's admit it. The idea that schools would become like prisons is just plain wrong.

Tom Shade
DuBois, Pennsylvania

RETHINKING THE BULLY

As educators, we work hard to dispel stereotypes of all kinds: ethnic, racial, gender, and religious. Your magazine frequently deals with the topics of tolerance and diversity.

Have you noticed that you are perpetuating the stereotype of the red-headed male, freckled-face bully with a crew cut? (See January and February 2002 issues).

As a middle school teacher, I know bullies can be boys or girls; black, white, or other; have fair, olive, or dark skin; and have hair of all kinds.

Please, when illustrating bullies or misbehaviors, be sensitive to the feelings of redheads with freckles!

Judy Rosenberg
Des Moines, Iowa

TEACHING HUMAN RIGHTS

I applaud Amnesty International for the educational materials on human rights and the educators who actually use the information in a just way to help students know their world and its weaknesses ("A Sense of Social Justice," March).

I am a Muslim by birth, but have been an American citizen for many years. Due to the tragic September 11 incident, I believe students are very curious about Islam and Muslims. Unfortunately the media does not provide authentic information. This leaves us with educators like Ms. Ambrose, Ms. Bishop, and people like me who are firm believers in human rights to do this job.

Farhana Shah
Silver Spring, Maryland

ZERO TOLERANCE

As I sat waiting for a judge to hear my assault complaint against one of my former students, I read two letters in *NEA Today* about teachers and disruptive students.

I was in court because I follow a simple policy: If you assault me, I call the police and file charges. In six years at an alternative high school I have been assaulted twice. What I've discovered is this: If we don't protect ourselves, no one else will.

I have heard teachers say, "But I don't want to make trouble." Unfortunately, not filing charges actually makes more trouble. A child who assaults a teacher needs help, and often the best way to get help is to get the courts involved. This can benefit not only the needy child but the rest of the class.

If nothing else, think about this: Do you really believe that a child who gets away with assaulting a teacher won't try it again?

Timothy Mark Mennuti
Annapolis, Maryland

JUNK FOOD: SELLING OUT

The two opinions about junk food (Debate, March) completely avoid the larger issue. Food is a personal choice, and machinations by the administration are not likely to alter the eating choices of high schools students. The issue is not about what we are selling. It is about what we are giving away.

By allowing any consumer logo into the school, we are bestowing upon it a credibility that it could never achieve on its own. We make a few bucks off it, but we have let the demon in. In fact, by courting large corporations we invite the demon in. The money we make is nothing to them. But the credibility and product exposure we give them is worth millions in potential sales.

Valerie Wood
Espanola, New Mexico

WHERE GO THE SAVINGS?

Your article, "Retiring on Next to Nothing" (February) was very informative. As one who spent many years in the corporate world and decided to leave it to teach, I want to know why my social security benefits have to be reduced when I retire. I paid my dues and expect full benefits like anyone else. Thanks for the important information.

Jerry Hund
West Chicago, Illinois

OLYMPIC UPDATE

NEA Today has learned about several additional members who participated in the 2002 Winter Olympic Games:

- Liz Brigham, Maryland, middle school physical education teacher, torch relay
- Edward Burnheter, Florida, retired industrial arts teacher, Olympic security
- Betsy Carpenter, Florida, retired music teacher, torch relay
- Christopher Cook, Maryland, elementary physical education teacher, torch relay
- Keith Hodson, Colorado, middle school teacher, Olympic security
- Judith McVaugh, Florida, retired school librarian, Olympic security
- Elizabeth Parr-Smestad, Minnesota, physical education teacher, torch relay
- Denise Paulson, Minnesota, first grade teacher, torch relay
- Sheldon Swedlove, California, social studies teacher, torch relay.

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

- By mail: Write to Letters, NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- Through the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Submit a Letter to the Editor"
- By E-mail: Write to neatoday@nea.org
- By Fax: 202/822-7206
- By Phone: 202/822-7201

Letters are edited for length and clarity.

President's Viewpoint

BY BOB CHASE

A Letter to Zoe

My first grandchild, Zoe Simone Kilgore, was born March 18, 2002.

My dearest Zoe,

Growing up you're going to get a lot of advice. And some of it will be worth taking—stuff like: it's very hard to hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk, you should always wear sunblock while at the beach, and the Boston Red Sox will break your heart.

These are known as the eternal verities.

But what I would like to do is try to tell you about the things adults usually don't talk about.

Within each person is a place where we are always alone with ourselves. It's like a secret garden, and in it we keep the treasures we hold closest to our heart.

I love you and I don't care who knows it or how mushy it sounds. But you should know that many people don't like revealing what's in their secret garden for fear that other people will make fun of them. But don't let that fool you—everyone has a secret garden.

Now, Zoe, you will be heading off to school in a blink of a grandfather's eye, so let me share a secret about the teachers you will have. They won't mind my telling.

Teachers keep in their secret garden the memory of a very special teacher that they had when they were kids in school. This teacher made a big difference in their lives. Your grandpa had such a teacher. His name is Alan Carlsen, and he helped me understand that I was worth something, that I had the potential to be more than I could imagine. A teacher has this gift. A teacher teaches you to fear less and hope more, whine less and work more, talk less and say more.

"Your teachers want to light you up with the knowledge of all that you can do and learn."

Thanks to Mr. Carlsen and the other teachers I had in school, I became a teacher myself, and served for six years as president of the National Education Association, working with the good and giving people in our public schools.

It has been my great honor. The skill, care, and tender aspirations of public school employees never cease to inspire me. They are my heroes. I have seen them—as you will soon—staying after class to help a struggling student. I've seen them comforting the sick child. I've seen them directing the drama club after a long day in the classroom. I've seen them stepping between the bullies and their victims.

But as you will discover, these good and giving people sometimes feel isolated from each other and are unaware of the impact they're having on the world—I don't know why. Maybe it's because they're pretty tired at the end of the day.

So your grandpa has been busy singing the praises of unsung heroes. He's cheered on the teachers and education support professionals who are determined to make our public schools better for all. I hope some day, Zoe, that you, too, will find work that satisfies the soul as I have.

Always remember that your teachers want to do for you what their teachers did for them. They want to light you up with the knowledge of all that you can do and learn. For teachers, this is like hitting a home run or winning a big prize.

Speaking of prizes, Zoe, I am certain you are destined for great things. So when you save the world and win the Nobel Prize for peace or literature or science—perhaps all three—please don't forget to thank the teachers who made it all possible.

Love,
Your grandpa Bob

Comments? E-mail Bob Chase at BobChase@nea.org

Focus on Finance

Information and helpful tips on managing your money – brought to you by NEA Member Benefits.

Tame the Tax Man

Small changes can help you avoid any ugly surprises next April. First off, if you're expecting a raise or a large capital gain that'll put you in a higher tax bracket, put some extra money on the side based on what you expect to pay next year.

Also be tactical and timely with your deductions. Medical care can only be deducted after exceeding 7.5% of your gross income and miscellaneous expenses only after 2%. You could pay medical bills or other expenses like tax preparation or association dues in advance before the end of the year to raise your itemized deductions over the minimum. Or, it may be better to defer payments until the next year if you don't have many other expenses. Lastly, be prepared for an audit by having your papers organized in labeled envelopes or by using financial software. Then you'll be ready if the taxman cometh.

Surf Safer

The online world can seem unfriendly, but luckily these and other resources can protect and inform you.

Spot and report fraud online at www.fraud.org, run by the National Consumers League.

Find unbiased information on consumer issues including recalls, product safety and more on www.consumerreports.org.

Terrific Time-Saver

Ask your bank about free automatic bill payment on utilities, even mortgages. Save stamps, time and avoid late penalties. Be sure to pick different days so they're not all deducted at once.

See from Sea to Shining Sea

This summer, rediscovering your homeland could be one of the most enjoyable ways to show your patriotism. Everywhere you look there are tremendous deals on airfare, hotels, cruises, and even discounted package trips. The way to get the best deals is to compare prices directly with airlines and hotels as well as on travel websites. Don't forget that as an NEA member you also get special car rental discounts! So whether you're hankering for big city excitement, the wonders of nature, or the time-honored road trip, America the beautiful is the place to be this summer.

No-Fuss Budget

Budgets are simply a plan for spending and saving money. It's never too late or too early to make one to help you reach financial goals.

☐ **1. Goals –** Write down long-term savings plans (like tuition or retirement) and short-term, big purchase plans (like a down payment or a trip) with a timeline that sets a goal to meet each month.

☐ **2. Cash flow –** List total monthly income including salary, commissions, etc. Then list fixed expenses, like your mortgage. For variables like food and clothes, see step 3.

☐ **3. Track spending –** Calculate variable expenses like food by itemizing exactly how much you spend on groceries and eating out in one week. Do the same thing two more times, and compare results to find an average (and hopefully ways to save like packing lunch or buying in bulk).

☐ **4. Check yourself –** Label 4 columns: amount spent last month, this month's budget, actual amount spent, and the difference between columns 2 and 3. Calculate variable expenses at the average, high and low ends for an idea of where the most room for change lies.

☐ **5. Review –** Compare what you spent vs. what you budgeted. A close look can help you set and meet realistic goals. Once you've budgeted for a month, a year's easy.

Some Cellular Sense

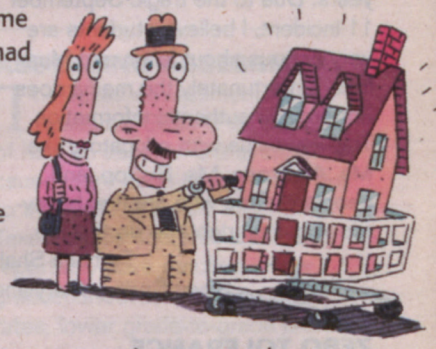
With so many cell phone providers and plan options available, keep these strategies in mind. Most importantly, figure out how you will use the phone. If you'll be calling a family member most often, like your spouse, look for a two-phone plan with a special rate for calling each other. Also, it's better to select more prepaid minutes than to pay for excess minutes every month. Last, before you pay for unlimited long distance, night and weekend service, consider whether you're more likely to make those calls from home.

House Hound

Buying a home is a big decision that doesn't have to be overwhelming if you follow these helpful hints.

Get help: Choose a professional, active real estate agent you're comfortable with. However, remember they have other clients and you should look on your own, too. Hire an attorney that handles real estate law and closings. Pay for a professional home inspection to find any problems that can be used to negotiate a lower purchase price or repairs before you close (take a final walk-through to make sure). The bank's appraisal also helps you determine the value of your home.

Get prepared: Take photos and notes of homes you see, and don't see too many in one day – it's confusing. Find out how long the house has been on the market and why. Interview residents of the area you're interested in to learn about recurring issues. Avoid houses with foundation problems or a flat roof (they leak). Don't purchase a foreclosure home unless you've had it completely checked out. Don't make a really big purchase in the months before you apply for a mortgage.



Spend less: A pre-approved mortgage shows you what you can afford. Opt for a fixed mortgage when rates are low. Save as much money as you can for your down payment. Selling prices can be negotiated, and buyers – not sellers – set prices. Remember, realtors and mortgage brokers are not always looking out for your interest. You don't have to buy a home for your entire approved mortgage amount. Buying in a rush, succumbing to pressure to close quickly, and telling the seller or agent the highest amount you'll spend may cost you more. If you break the contract due to a contingency that was not previously stipulated, you probably won't get your deposit back.

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Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
(or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET

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Sources: The Consumer Reports Money Book, 2000; Kiplinger's, February 2002; Money, February 2002; www.housebuyingtips.com; www.homebuyinghelp.com

AVNT0502

Beating the Odds

Working with special needs students showed this teacher how education enriches the lives of all students.

BY TRUDEE SCHUR

During my 30 years as an educator, I have learned a great deal from my students. When I coached athletics, I learned about the competitive spirit in each one of my students. When I taught method classes full time at the university, I learned about the drive each student had to complete his or her degree.

But I have learned the most during the past 22 years I have spent assisting special needs students.

Are special needs students too needy to attend postsecondary education? I think not! In my current position as the special populations coordinator at Southeast Technical Institute, I work with students who have average and above average IQs, students who have a diagnosed disability that sometimes blocks their academic success.

I have seen students succeed who could barely speak, read, see, or write because of a disability. They have outstanding academic aptitudes. I honor these students for their tremendous motivation to succeed and their incredible determination to overcome unbelievable obstacles.

I understand there is a fine line between letting classroom accommodations go too far and maintaining a true picture of what students actually can do according to industry standards. But we are the educational institution preparing these students for their chosen careers. Will they all be able to meet all the industry standards? Probably not. And of course employers will demand the same work standards from them as everyone else on the job who receives the same pay.

I know we must maintain the integrity of the degree program and the standards of the educational institution and not lose sight of those focal points. However, if we alter the delivery of instruction so students can obtain the same lecture content or laboratory skills with some accommodations, then we as educators have done our job to prepare these students for the workforce.

Will all of these students make it in the workforce or even to the workforce? Maybe not. But I choose to think that as quality educators we should assist all individuals with lifelong learning, and I do mean lifelong. People often change their minds about accommodation and modification issues after their daughter has a brain injury, or a nephew becomes a quadriplegic, or a brother loses his sight, or a granddaughter is born deaf. Sometimes going to school is all these individuals can look forward to in their lives. If we can keep the gears turning in their brains, if we can keep those fingers, arms, and legs moving, and if we can pinpoint learning disabilities and enable students to advocate for themselves, we have done a good thing!

Ken Klotzbach

Trudee Schur believes all students need the opportunity to enrich their skills and pursue their goals.

My students have given me such pleasure and have taught me so much. Fourteen years ago, when I met my first deaf adult student, I realized how naïve I was. I had no idea about anything! He was an outstanding electronics student, and he taught me about deaf culture. By using interpreters, flashing lights on the meter readers, and other adaptive equipment, he was a successful student—and so was I.

Another true success involved one of my quadriplegic students, an outstanding computer programming major. This young man needed a scribe, plus his speech was difficult to understand. He didn't like to use printing devices because he felt they limited people's efforts to try to understand him. This student has since graduated and I have seen him in the community many times. He is such a loving, happy, spirited person—I would take a dozen students just like him. He said many times that I taught him the ropes at school, but in reality he taught me the ropes for compassion and life.

If I have not said that I love my job, maybe you can feel it through this article. When a new student walks through my door I wonder, "How are we going to do this?" How can I have a deaf student work on heavy duty equipment or in surgical technology? How can I have a bipolar student take a 7 a.m. class? How can I have a person with neurological damage who can't read go into any program?

Then I remember how much I hate to turn any student away and how much I love to see these students beat the odds. If they have the motivation and desire to do this, we keep on climbing together.

All students need the opportunity to enrich their skills and meet their goals. Would I give this up? Never! ✓

Trudee Schur is the special populations coordinator at Southeast Technical Institute in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. She also is vice president of the Sioux Falls Education Association.

This is the final issue of *NEA Today* for the school year. Now is an especially good time for you to send us your story ideas so we can follow up on them as we plan next year's issues.

Our planning process actually started earlier this year than in the past, beginning with a February all-day session with our local editor advisory panel—eight NEA members who edit their own local newsletters.

Bill Fischer
editor

In a full day of discussions, the panel of teachers and ESP (see page two for their names and locations) shared their thoughts about what they feel works and what doesn't in *NEA Today*, as well as what they'd like to see covered in future issues.

This kind of feedback, coupled with the panelists' monthly critique of each issue, helps us to stay abreast of our members' interests and concerns.

Our planning continues with a series of meetings involving the *NEA Today* staff as well as staff who work in other NEA program areas.

We'll also be doing a readership survey, something we've done each year since *NEA Today* began 20 years ago. The survey results help us to verify basic information about our readers. For example, the survey asks how much time members spend reading each issue and what they do with the issue after they read it.

As our planning sessions end, we wind up with a list of cover story and feature topics for the upcoming year, along with topics for other parts of the magazine, such as the debate and dilemma questions.

Although the next issue of *NEA Today* doesn't go on press until August, we have to put together most of the September and October issues in May and June. Even parts of the November issue are finished by the time the staff leaves for NEA's Annual Meeting (in Dallas this year) in late June.

So, if you have a story idea you want us to consider, send it to neatoday@nea.org.

Bill Fischer

English Lessons

When students don't speak English, what's the best route to classroom success—and high test scores?

Jim Harrison

Kindergarten teacher Angelique Rivera is tuned in to her English-language learners in part because she literally speaks their language—Spanish.

At Chandler Magnet School in Worcester, Massachusetts, a sign outside the main office reads, in bold red letters, "¿Qué necesitas para pasar el MCAS? Asistencia, Aspiración, Ayuda, Asignaciones, Actitud." (What do you need to pass the MCAS? Attendance, aspiration, help, homework, attitude.)

Many students here don't speak English yet, so they'll be taking the third and fourth grade versions of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), the state test, in Spanish. And, of course, the school and its educators will be judged on their performance.

Motivational signs like these may be popping up nationwide in the next few years as the revised federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act takes effect with its new testing mandates. English-language learners (ELL) will be expected to reach the same levels of achievement as fluent English speakers, and schools where they don't will face escalating penalties (see box on page 9).

The number of ELL students is growing fast nationwide—up 27 percent in just two years.

Some educators feel the best way to help ELL students achieve is to "immerse" them in English instruction, with little or no use of their native language, even if that means they can't follow what's going on in class for a while.

Others favor teaching in the native language while also teaching English part of the day—"bilingual" education.

Worcester schools have advocates of both points of view and many more in between, but in Massachusetts, the decision on how to educate these children may not be made by educators at all. It may be determined at the ballot box next fall if a referendum severely restricting bilingual education passes.

Bankrolled by Ronald Unz, the California software tycoon who underwrote anti-bilingual campaigns in several other states, the referendum is opposed by the Massachusetts Teachers Association. If passed, the restrictions would take effect in the fall of 2003.

Passage of the proposal would throw a monkey wrench into Worcester's varied and sophisticated language instruction system where the guiding principle is, one size doesn't fit all.

Here, 10 percent of school children are not fluent in English, and the ranks keep growing. Worcester educators have responded with bilingual classes, two-way bilingual classes, "structured" English immersion, after-school tutoring, and many more variations, depending on students' ages, their skill level, the number of other students speaking their language, the availability of bilingual teachers and teaching assistants, and the preferences of their parents.

Angelique Rivera, who teaches kindergarten at Chandler Magnet School, strongly supports bilingual education because of her own experience growing up in a Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican family in Florida. "I had total immersion in school, and I was shuffled to the back of the room," she says. "I basically learned English by myself. But I didn't learn to read until sixth grade."

Rivera teaches Spanish-speaking children. She often speaks English with them, but when she's talking about academic content, she uses their native language.

"I teach how to make graphs, how to read, and critical thinking skills," she explains. "I'm preparing them for MCAS in kindergarten." She notes they couldn't master such complex material in English.

Most of these children, Rivera believes, will be ready for all-English instruction at the end of the second grade. If the Unz proposal passes, she says, "I'm going to feel sorry for teachers who are given 15 kids, don't understand their culture, and can't speak their language—they won't be able to teach them. And I'm going to feel sorry for the kids."

But maybe she won't have to. Chandler Magnet School also has teachers who can't speak their students' languages in a pilot "structured English" program. Joanna Voyiatzis has 16 children, grades one through three, who

see ENGLISH LESSONS page 10

Small's World

A Nevada teacher works hard to adjust to rising numbers of non-English speaking students.

In many ways Theo Small is living his dream as a fourth and fifth grade teacher at Mountain View Elementary School in Las Vegas, Nevada. He loves his students. He has "aha!" moments almost every day. His colleagues are great. And because he's at an outdoor school—the classroom doors open to the breezy blue yonder—he never goes wanting for big splashes of sunshine and air.

But here's the rub: In the eight years since he began teaching at Mountain View, Small has seen his classes shift from majority white to 98 percent limited- and non-English speaking Hispanic. Not that this is bad; it's just that Small is a Utah born-and-bred Caucasian who doesn't speak Spanish. Needless to say, the way he taught just five years ago has been turned on its head. "It's completely changed my classroom," says Small. "Everything I do is different."

In the Clark County School District, the sixth-fastest growing urban district in the country, Small is nowhere near alone. A booming service economy that has lured hundreds of thousands of job-seeking Hispanics to the area—there's been a 250 percent surge since 1999 alone—is also testing the backbone of the school system.

School officials project that by the 2004-05 academic year, the number of non-English speaking students will have more than doubled, from 40,000 to nearly 90,000 out of 245,000. But in a district that long has struggled with funding and teacher shortages, the challenges are already formidable. And for teachers like Small, things are sure to get tougher under the new English proficiency demands of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Testing each year, pressures to bring non-English speaking students along faster—it all makes Small wonder about the fairness of it.

"If I'm getting a student who's been in a U.S. school for two years," says Small, "I know that he may have basic language ability and can understand when I give directions, especially if I'm using lots of visuals.

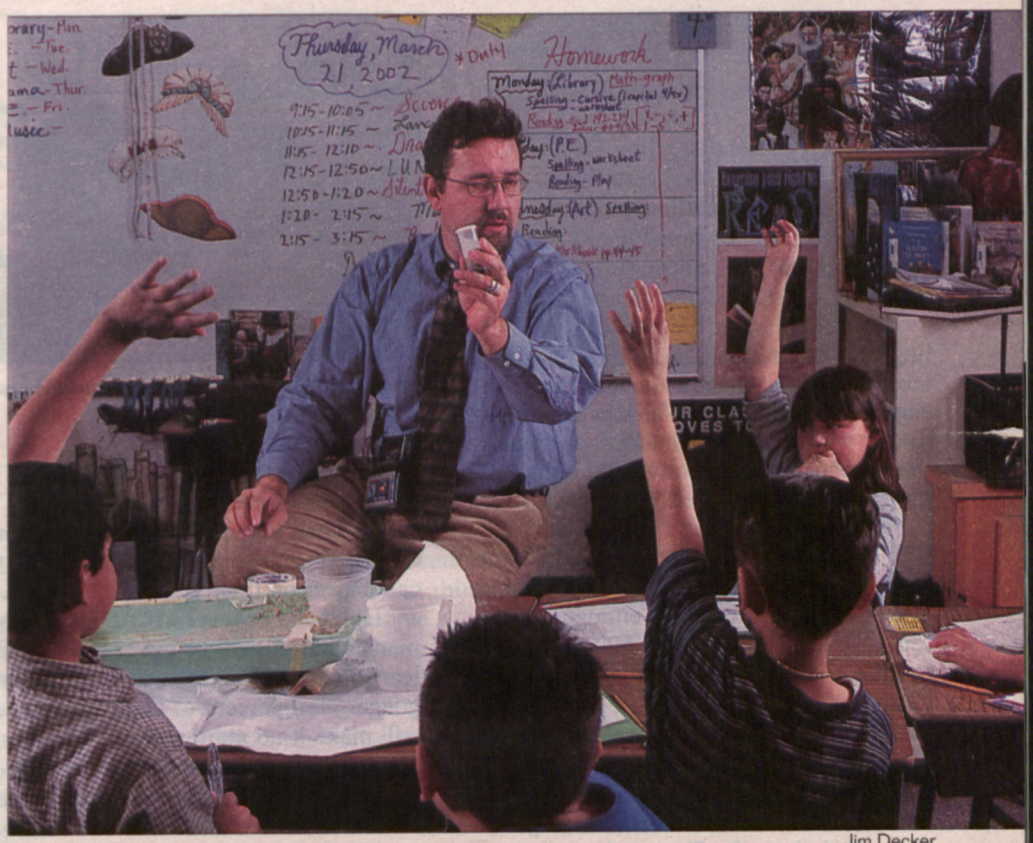
"But for the most part, he's not going to be able to take a fifth grade test and succeed. It's understanding abstract concepts that's so hard. You're talking about developmental language." And that, he says, just doesn't come overnight.

It takes time and patience to cultivate developmental language, says Small. It also takes resources and lots of support—and in his district, both are in short supply. At Mountain View, where more than a third of the students are English-language learners (ELL), only a handful of the teachers are officially certified to teach them. That's because the school district doesn't pay for the training, even though an ELL-trained teacher is required to be in every class where ELL students number more than half.

Officials insist they'll be more funds next year for teacher development and a host of new testers, but meanwhile the result has been this: Eager professionals like Small who forked over their own money to pay for training have been forced to absorb as many ELL students as possible to keep their schools compliant with the law.

At Mountain View this has effectively meant the segregation of most ELL students from English-speaking students, which has curtailed the kind of interaction Small is convinced would help build their English skills faster. "When my class walks down the hallway, we're like 'the little brown class'," he says. "It really frustrates me."

But that's just the start. Small's classes are big—he has 34 students now, two years ago he had 42. Many come and go; 30 percent of the school, as throughout the district, is transient. A quarter of Small's own students had left by March, and new ones were coming.



Jim Decker

Theo Small uses lots of visuals and hands-on props to teach English to his mostly Hispanic students.

There's no aide and not enough of certain books. In addition, few parents speak English, making it difficult to support language development at home. Small usually relies on the goodwill of a couple of bilingual staff members to help him forge relationships with parents.

There's one last issue, too, says one of Small's colleagues, first grade ELL teacher Mary Francis Ringstad. Though she speaks fluent Spanish and is fortunate to be teamed with an English-speaking class during certain periods of the year (Mountain View is year-round), Ringstad says she deals with large numbers of students who come to school with no skills at all—even in their native language.

"It's incredible," she says. "It makes it doubly hard because you can't translate when they don't even know what it is in Spanish."

So she worries about whether the new law will take these kinds of intangibles into consideration. "I think we may be looking to accomplish something too quickly," she says. "It's impossible to think that many of my students are going to be at grade level by third grade."

Yet the good news, says Small, is that teaching is still joyously satisfying to him and his colleagues because "language is so connecting for these students....They're energetic and many do learn quickly."

He says he just hopes help—not harm—is on the way. ✔

—Marilyn Milloy

New Rules for Testing Immigrant Children

Under the recently revised Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), children who have attended school in the United States for at least three consecutive years will be tested in English for reading and language arts. They must meet the same standards for proficiency as other students.

If any subgroup of students—such as English-language learners—in any school do not make rapid progress toward meeting these standards, the school will be subjected to escalating sanctions that may include replacing some staff after four years and complete reorganization after six.

The ESEA, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act, neither encourages nor discourages teaching children in their native language while they learn English.

ENGLISH LESSONS from page 8

speak six different languages. They started the year knowing no English.

"These kids are doing fine," she says. "I'm very impressed by their success." She teaches grade level math, coping with the language problem by drawing lots of pictures. And the children use simpler reading materials than native English speakers do.

Home support is the key to learning English fast and well, and Voyiatzis says most of her parents are educated and eager to help. "They are always coming in to talk with me, through aides who speak their language: 'How's my child doing? Is there anything you need?'" she says.

But many immigrant parents can't be so helpful. "I have students whose parents leave for work at 6:30 a.m. and get home at 6 at night, just to make enough money for basic needs," says Juan Matos, who teaches a sixth grade bilingual class at Chandler.

At City View School, three miles east of Chandler, Joan Didzbalis teaches English to small groups of children, 40 minutes to an hour at a time, kindergarten through sixth grade. She cautions that children who can converse in English may not be ready to learn their academics that way. If they have to labor to understand each word, they may not grasp the meaning of the whole passage.

Didzbalis speaks a little Spanish, and she puts herself in the student role to help the children understand the challenge they must overcome on the MCAS.

"I read to them from a Spanish story,

Jim Harrison

Joan Didzbalis' immigrant students get the point—in English.

and they say, 'You did good, Miss D!' But I tell them I have no idea what I just read." Then they practice strategies for deciphering the difficult questions they can expect on the test.

Didzbalis believes MCAS scores for many children will be lower if they can't learn their academics in their native language. "Ten percent of language learners will make it no matter what," she says. "Others definitely learn better in bilingual. Some need it for one or two years. Others need five to seven years.

"Each child is looked at differently in Worcester." ✔

—Alain Jehlen

For more: Visit the NEA Web site at www.nea.org/issues/bilingual/, the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs at www.ncbe.gwu.edu, and the National Association for Bilingual Education at www.nabe.org.

What's the Score on English-Only?

Two years after California's 1998 referendum to eliminate bilingual education, a *New York Times* article reported that Spanish-speaking students in all-English classes were making "striking" progress, demonstrating that these classes were better than bilingual classes.

Angry bilingual education supporters denounced the article, saying it distorted state test results. Indeed, other newspaper reports drew very different conclusions from the same data.

So what really happened?

Studies from Stanford University and from Arizona State University show that scores on the California test jumped for all groups of students. Children placed in all-English classes did score higher, but so did children who stayed in bilingual classes.

The researchers suggested the higher scores could be due to the state's class size reduction program, or to teachers under pressure to "teach to the test," or both.

Under the law, students should receive a year of "structured English immersion" before being mainstreamed. During that year, teachers use simpler reading words, pictures, and other techniques to help children with a limited grasp of the language. A second year is allowed, but supporters of the law predicted that most children would become proficient in one year. The most recent state figures, however, show only 9 percent of English-language learners achieving proficiency per year.

Even before Proposition 227, just 29 percent of California's English-language learners were actually receiving bilingual education, in part because there weren't enough bilingual teachers.

After the new law took effect, the percentage of English learners in bilingual dropped to 12. It did not fall to zero because the law allows parents to get waivers and keep their children in bilingual classes.

The California referendum campaign was paid for by Silicon Valley multimillionaire Ronald Unz. The California Teachers Association opposed Proposition 227, but the organization is now trying to make it work. CTA created a program that has trained 7,000 teachers in structured English instruction. ✔

For more: Read the series on Proposition 227 in *California Educator*, the magazine of the California Teachers Association, at www.cta.org/cal_educator/v6i2/feature_fallout.html. Read the Stanford study at http://www.stanford.edu/~hakuta/SAT9/SAT9_2000/analysis2000.htm and the Arizona State study at http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n7/.

A Nation of Immigrants

STUDENTS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP)

	LEP Enrollment 1999-2000	Percent LEP 1999-2000
United States	4,416,580	9.30%
Alabama	7,260	1.00%
Alaska	19,721	14.80%
Arizona	125,311	14.70%
Arkansas	9,102	2.00%
California	1,480,527	24.90%
Colorado	60,031	8.50%
Connecticut	20,190	3.60%
Delaware	2,284	2.00%
District of Columbia	5,177	6.70%
Florida	235,181	9.90%
Georgia	30,491	2.20%
Hawaii	12,879	6.90%
Idaho	17,732	7.20%
Illinois	143,855	7.10%
Indiana	13,079	1.30%
Iowa	10,120	2.00%
Kansas	18,672	4.00%
Kentucky	4,847	0.70%
Louisiana	6,906	0.90%
Maine	2,748	1.30%
Maryland	20,855	2.50%
Massachusetts	45,065	4.60%
Michigan	44,471	2.60%
Minnesota	45,640	5.40%
Mississippi	1,799	0.40%
Missouri	10,238	1.10%
Montana	4,016	2.60%
Nebraska	9,144	3.20%
Nevada	40,469	12.40%
New Hampshire	2,471	1.20%
New Jersey	49,847	3.90%
New Mexico	76,661	23.60%
New York	228,730	8.00%
North Carolina	41,667	3.30%
North Dakota	8,324	7.40%
Ohio	16,841	0.90%
Oklahoma	38,823	6.20%
Oregon	43,845	8.00%
Pennsylvania	28,540	1.60%
Rhode Island	10,245	6.50%
South Carolina	5,577	0.90%
South Dakota	5,495	4.20%
Tennessee	11,039	1.20%
Texas	554,949	13.90%
Utah	41,306	8.60%
Vermont	936	0.90%
Virginia	31,675	2.80%
Washington	55,709	5.60%
West Virginia	1,039	0.40%
Wisconsin	27,184	3.10%
Wyoming	2,253	2.40%

SOURCE: National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs. Survey of the States' Limited English Proficient Students and Available Educational Programs and Services. 1999-2000 Summary Report.

Should all students be bilingual?

DOUGLAS WARD *is a bilingual learning disabilities resource teacher at William Nashold Elementary school in Rockford, Illinois. He is in his third year of teaching and is certified in bilingual special education and several other fields.*

yes

Yes, all students should be bilingual.

Unfortunately, in the United States very few students become truly proficient in a foreign language. That is one reason for the shortage of foreign language and bilingual teachers.

Before the world wars, many immigrants in the United States used their native languages daily while they learned English. But the world wars and isolationist policies created a climate in which it was unpopular to speak anything but English. In some cities, fines were imposed on anyone caught speaking a foreign language in public business.

Many descendents of immigrants never learned their parents' or grandparents' native languages—in my case, Polish and German—because of these attitudes. My grandparents and parents, pressured by society, did not understand the importance of passing on their languages to me.

Learning a foreign language involves more than learning how to read, write, and speak. More importantly, it teaches students about a culture. Lack of understanding of cultural differences causes intolerance and war.

The people of the United States and the world need to be, not just tolerant, but accepting of other cultures. We need to embrace and celebrate our many cultures. Studying a foreign language and becoming bilingual opens one's mind to new thinking and creates new opportunities to communicate with other people.

Language can be the key to a lasting peace between enemies. Learning another language is the best way to make friends.

Students in many other countries learn at least one foreign language in their public schools. In the United States, few schools even offer a foreign language in elementary school.

As global businesses and trade expand, the need to know a second language is growing tremendously. Many businesses in other countries want to do business with us. Their salespeople speak English and know our customs. We need people who know other languages and cultures so that our exports will increase and our economy will become stronger.

Learning another language may also spill over into other areas. Research shows that bilingualism leads to cognitive advantages that may raise scores on some intelligence tests.

Studies also show a correlation between knowing two languages and linguistic abilities that may facilitate early reading acquisition. That, in turn, could boost academic achievement. ✔

Chris Lensch

SUZANNE EMERY *retired last year after 35 years of teaching English and journalism, the last 25 at San Diego's Mira Mesa High School. She reviews questions for California's high school exit exam and edits the San Diego Education Association newsletter.*

no

American education cannot be all things for all people.

We've agreed generally on the need to improve achievement in the basic curriculum. Bilingualism should not be added to the mix. Nor should it join all the other mandates that politically correct states and school districts impose: cultural holidays, parenting classes, good health activities, well-rounded social growth, adequate physical activities, proper nutrition, and suicide prevention.

A second language is always a luxury. It is needed only for the college bound and then only in certain majors.

We're told that European countries require two languages. But many European countries are very small, so bilingualism is a survival skill. And few other countries try to educate 100 percent of their children, as we do. In Europe, education is at the top of parents' priorities. Need we talk about the distractions here?

And what is the second language of bilingual children around the world? It is English. We need to educate our own kids for success in that universal language. Our schools can barely gather materials and teachers for the standard curriculum, let alone for another language.

If schools required a second language, what would it be? Spanish, Japanese, or French? How should we decide? What about all our students who speak Hmong, Farsi, or Tagalog? Would we mandate a third language for them?

Comfort in two languages is valuable in many venues and often desired for reasons of tradition. But families that want another language can do what they've always done: Saturday school, magnet schools, and temple classes.

If a district is so insular that it lacks the diverse quilt of contemporary America, its sterility and guilt should not be visited on the rest of the country.

So many American schools are like mine in San Diego where students regularly exchange videos with relatives in Vietnam, make the annual family pilgrimage to Mexico, edit the Islamic Center's youth newsletter, and produce pamphlets in graphic arts class for the Buddhist temple.

Here in California, with the nation's largest enrollment of newcomers, the challenge is to prepare all students for world-class competition, culminating with a high school exit exam in English, because English communication is key to success in academics and in adult life. That also applies to the rest of the country.

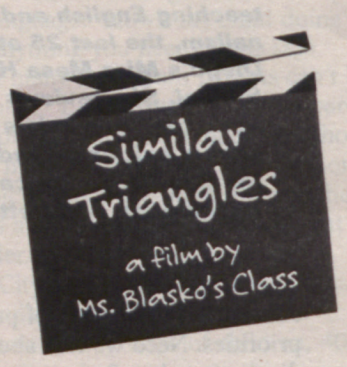
We cannot afford another diversion added to the overflowing plate of public education. ✔

What's Your Opinion?

Should all students be bilingual?
To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Are uniforms a good way to improve student discipline and motivation?
The tally on this Debate question from the last *NEA Today:*
47% Yes **53% No**

Learning. Cleverly



How do you get a classroom full of restless kids interested in geometry? Pique their interest and their enthusiasm with Apple's revolutionary iMovie.™

"Do you know how to tell the height of something if you can't reach the top?" Maria Blasko's students learn a valuable lesson in geometry.

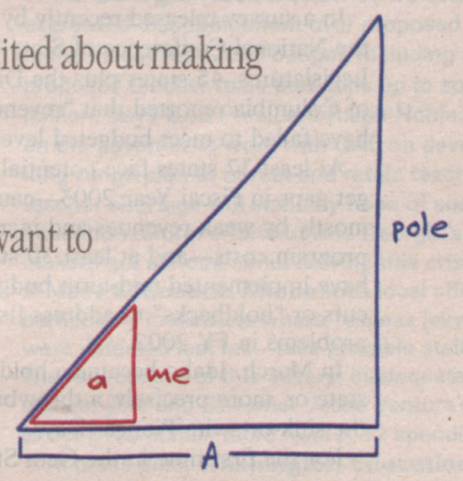
Maria Blasko, a math teacher in East Palo Alto, California, uses iMovie to take lessons out of the textbook and give them real-world applications. "With the 'Similar Triangles' movie, I took a concept that can be very hard for students to grasp in the classroom environment and took it outside, to get the students involved in the process. Instead of listening to me

By filming the "Similar Triangles" lesson, Maria Blasko brings new life to an old subject.

disguised as a movie.

iMovie uses simple drag-and-drop technology. So you can focus on teaching, not editing.

tell them about the relationship between similar triangles of differing size, they experienced it. And because we were filming the process they really focused on the assignment and became excited about making the movie. The best part is that once the lesson is done the students want to watch it again and again. So it really reinforces what they've learned." In short, iMovie, combined with inspired teaching, is a formula for student success. To see how Maria and other teachers are using iMovie to energize lessons and connect to their students, call 1-800-800-APPL or visit www.apple.com/teachimovie.



Ms. Blasko built a stronger relationship with her students by combining a passion for teaching with the power of iMovie.

Think different.

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Idahoans Rally Against Budget Cuts

NEA members and a broad array of supporters urge lawmakers to make education a *priority.*

Last year, Idaho state legislators doled out $100 million in tax breaks despite warnings from economists that the economy was weakening. Then came September 11. Tax revenues did not meet optimistic projections, costs kept climbing for vital public services, a $300 million budget surplus dissolved, and a deep deficit emerged.

Sound strangely familiar? Chances are Idaho's fiscal crater is as huge as the one that's been deepened and widened in *your* state.

In a survey released recently by the National Conference of State Legislatures, 45 states plus the District of Columbia reported that "revenues have failed to meet budgeted levels."

At least 37 states face potential budget gaps in Fiscal Year 2003—caused mostly by weak revenues and increased program costs—and at least 30 states have implemented mid-term budget cuts or "holdbacks" to address fiscal problems in FY 2002.

In March, Idaho became a holdback state or, more precisely, a throwback to the sink-or-swim Pioneer Days.

For the first time in the Gem State's 112-year history, legislators—with the full approval of Governor Dirk Kempthorne—implemented a holdback in the K-12 education budget, slicing $23.3 million from the current $933 million spending plan.

And then the legislature and governor hacked again, paring the FY 2003 budget to $920 million—$13 million less than the amount for which school districts budgeted this year.

State policymakers ignored real options to a K-12 budget holdback. They could have drawn more from the state's rainy day fund and Idaho's tobacco settlement fund than the sum to which they finally agreed. And they could have delayed implementation of last year's tax breaks.

"If you want to create a climate in which private sector investment is discouraged, you do it most quickly by cutting back in public schools and higher ed institutions."

—Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction Marilyn Howard

For Idaho schools, it could all mean teacher/ESP layoffs and larger class sizes; cuts in successful statewide reading, mentoring, and technology programs; and the loss of newer teachers to better-paying jobs in the private sector.

"Make Kids Priority Number One!" Lawmakers' ready refrain—*we must all tighten our belts during these tough times*—made the entire Idaho school community tighten its shoelaces for a March 5 day of protest coordinated by the Idaho Education Association/NEA.

"Our goal was to do something extraordinary to get legislators' attention," says IEA President Kathy Phelan.

And extraordinary it was. Planned in less than a week, four different rallies—two at the Statehouse in Boise, one in Lewiston, and one in the cold rain in Coeur d'Alene—drew a total of some 8,200 protesters.

A cross section of Idahoans showed up that day, holding handmade signs with messages such as "Make Kids Priority #1" and "Fund Schools Today, Not Prisons Tomorrow."

In the crowds were active and retired teachers, education support professionals, parents and PTA members, students of all ages, and school board members and administrators—right up to

Cuts in education budgets drew protesters to the Statehouse in Boise.

Photos by Pam Benham

the state superintendent of public instruction, Marilyn Howard.

"It was great to see people I knew from all over the state, and how quickly they got together for a cause!" said Marsing Middle School computer skills teacher Rick Folwell.

"I saw more ESPs in the crowd than I thought I would—it was wonderful," added Sandra Nalley, registrar at Century High School in Pocatello.

"We need to be standing right there with the teachers," Nalley stressed, "because these cuts will affect districts as a whole. Classified staff better be afraid of layoffs—we don't have collective bargaining rights and contracts, and we're not guaranteed a job."

"Most legislators, I believe, aren't proud of what they've done—they say their crystal balls don't show a speedy end to the recession," Superintendent Howard told ralliers in Boise. "The problem is that if you want to create a climate in which private sector investment is discouraged, you do it most quickly by cutting back on your public schools and your higher education institutions."

Young teachers Rick Folwell and Mark Klar spoke to the Statehouse rally about the challenges faced by newcomers to the profession—fear for their own children's future, money spent out of pocket for school supplies, and financial sacrifices made to teach.

"Many of us could have chosen other careers that would have made it easier to support our families," said Folwell, a fifth-year teacher and IEA local affiliate president. "I have an identical twin brother who is able to command more money with an associate's degree than I am with a master's in education."

Folwell tells *NEA Today* that he thought "long and hard" over five years about whether to stay in teaching. "I'm comfortable in the profession now," he says, "but a lot of new Idaho teachers will not stay because of the budget cutbacks."

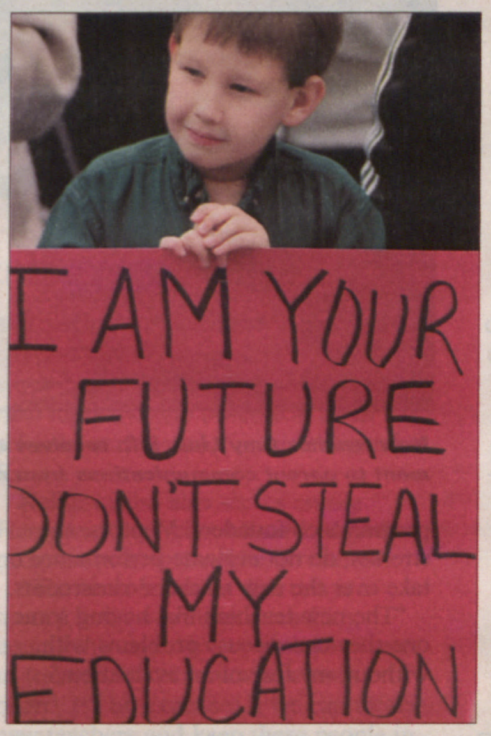
Other Statehouse speakers didn't pull any punches.

"How can we teach our children to value education when they see how much our government undervalues it?" thundered Idaho State PTA Board member Kristi Spicer.

Former state Superintendent Jerry L. Evans noted that "There is nothing like a recession or economic downturn to test priority and commitment [to education]."

Evans, a Republican who never implemented a K-12 budget holdback during his 16-year tenure, said he learned long ago that "kids don't come to school with Ds or Rs on their foreheads and that Republicans and Democrats want their children well educated.

"In the future, every major decision concerning education is going to be made in the political arena," Evans observed. "Educators cannot afford not to be involved in politics."



A cross section of Idahoans—from students to retired educators—rallied March 5 in Boise, Lewiston, and Coeur d'Alene.

"Get involved in the politics of your legislative district this and every year," he advised, "identify and recruit candidates who understand the state's responsibility for education, and offer your help and your money before the election. Afterward is too late."

It's safe to say that Idaho educators now have the attention of legislators. ✔

For more on Idaho developments, go to the IEA Web site at www.idahoea.org. To read more about the state budget outlook for Fiscal Years 2002 and 2003, go to http://204.131.235.67/programs/fiscal/sfo2002.htm.

Idaho NEA Members Take Next Step

Idahoans may be down because of budget cuts, but don't count them out. The March 5 rallies "energized us and made us realize that we're not alone," says Idaho Education Association President Kathy Phelan. "Some legislators are talking to their constituents for the first time and trying to counteract our message in the newspapers."

The next step? IEA state and local leaders are talking about:

- **Political action.** In the run-up to November's legislative elections, IEA members are committing themselves to work a minimum of two hours on the campaign of their choice, starting with the primary elections.

"We need good, moderate public education supporters running in both parties," stresses Phelan. "A number of qualified new people have already volunteered to run."

- **The real cost of budget cuts.** "It's not effective to argue numbers with legislators—they can manipulate them," Phelan says. "Association members and a cross section of the public need to talk to lawmakers about what budget cuts do to kids. The 18,000 first graders in Idaho's public schools won't get another shot at first grade when the economy improves. We need to express *outrage* over how cuts jeopardize the future of kids and possibly the future of the economy."
- **Foresight in budgeting.** "No one came to our schools and asked exactly what we need," points out Rick Folwell, president of the 60-member Marsing Education Association.

"As a state," he recommends, "we should *plan* for what we need in education, find the money to cover it, and then put money away for the lean years. And it would be good for educators to have a voice in this process."

Balance Sheet

NEA State Affiliates Face Budget Challenges

- Facing an $845 million shortfall in the current two-year state budget, leaders of the **Oregon Education Association** recently met with 170 local affiliate leaders to develop a political/legislative action plan to secure adequate and stable funding for K-12 schools and community colleges. Their ideas will flesh out a program recommended by the OEA Funding Task Force that focuses on member education, coalition building, and community education.
- The **Georgia Association of Educators** has expressed disappointment over proposed reductions in the Fiscal Year 2003 budget, including a cut in a proposed teacher raise that adds up to some $12 million. Says GAE President Ralph Noble: "We call on the governor to work with GAE on developing a long-range plan to attract and retain teachers. The teacher shortage will stall any hope of success for education reform efforts unless Georgia's policy makers get serious about solving this crisis."
- Many **Education Minnesota** local affiliates—particularly in districts where "excess levy" referenda were defeated last fall—face possible staff reductions. The root causes of this misery: inadequate state funding last year and Governor Jesse Ventura's proposal to cut $100 million more from K-12 spending this year.
- At press time, **Washington Education Association** members were facing proposals to cut K-12 spending and slash school employee health benefits. "When our public schools already have a teacher shortage, cuttting teacher pay and benefits makes no sense," stresses WEA President Charles Hasse. "Voters must understand the link between competitive compensation and high-quality schools."

School Supply Tax Deduction Now Law

For the 2002 and 2003 tax years, K-12 teachers, counselors, and paraeducators—employed for at least 900 hours in a school year—can claim an "above-the-line" tax deduction for the first $250 of out-of-pocket expenses on student supplies. An eligible school employee does not have to itemize to qualify.

The new deduction—yielding a $409 million benefit over two years—is included in the economic stimulus bill signed by President Bush on March 9.

This write-off, backed from its inception by NEA, results from three years of effort by Senator Susan Collins (R-Maine), with help from Senators Mary Landrieu (D-Louisiana) and John Warner (R-Virginia).

"This legislation is important," says NEA President Bob Chase, "because it recognizes that often school employees go beyond their regular responsibilities, purchasing materials so that they can be better at their jobs and more helpful to their students." ✔

QUALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Getting Through the Rough Patches

A Virginia mentor program pairs new teachers with NEA-Retired members, while a broad partnership pays the bills.

As a first-year teacher, Amy Link admits she was anxious and a little uncertain when she first stepped into her third grade classroom at Langley Elementary School in Hampton, Virginia. But Link didn't have to face her class alone, thanks to a mentor program that pairs new teachers with retired classroom veterans from the Hampton area.

"My mentor was really great, the kids didn't even notice her in the room, and, if anything, there was somebody there to support me," says Link.

Bettyrene Pope, a retired elementary school teacher and Link's mentor, says Link blossomed in the program.

"There was a big change," Pope says. "She developed more confidence. She knew from the start what she wanted to do, but she needed to figure out how to get from point A to point B. I helped her through the rough patches."

This school-centered mentoring program draws on the knowledge of experienced and retired teachers in an effort to increase the retention rate of beginning teachers.

The program's 20 mentors guide and advise about 60 new teachers, notes Su Lively, president of the Hampton Education Association and one of the program's co-founders. Mentors, she stresses, do not evaluate performance or take over the new teachers' classrooms.

"The new teachers like having someone they can discuss problems with, without any fear of an evaluation," Lively says. "When the mentor comes into the classroom, there's no tenseness like when an administrator comes in. They can draw on the mentor for help."

The mentors help the new teachers build their confidence, says Ruthann Kellum, a past HEA president who collaborates on the program. They also provide practical tips on everything from where teachers should place their desks to how to manage the classroom and communicate with parents.

Most importantly, the mentors help their mentees overcome frustrations, and they encourage them to continue in the profession, Kellum adds.

Making this program work has taken the support of the Hampton local Association, the Virginia Education Association, VEA-Retired, and NEA-Retired. The school district and local universities have joined the collaboration as well.

As the program coordinator, Lively

New teacher Amy Link, left, receives tips on everything from classroom management to parent communications from mentor Bettyrene Pope, a retired teacher.

Photos by Joe Mahoney

"My mentor was really great, the kids didn't even notice her in the room, and, if anything, there was somebody there to support me."

—First-year elementary teacher Amy Link

THE BOTTOM LINE

FOSTER CHILDREN: A report says foster children are at great risk educationally due to school transfers and lack of teacher accessibility to birth parents. www.psrn.org/foster%20care%20press%20conf/exec%20summary%20of%20report.html.

EATING DISORDERS: Eight million Americans suffer from eating disorders. Symptoms usually arise during middle or high school years. Research says school-related factors can play a role in the onset of these diseases. www.asbj.com/current/research.html.

ENROLLMENT: Federal projections for school population changes between now and 2011 vary widely by region. An increase is projected in the West and a decrease for the Northeast and Midwest. http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/quarterly/winter01/q7-1.asp.

SOCIAL PROMOTION: In 1998, 41 percent of teachers reported that their schools promoted kids who had reached a maximum age. In 2002, 33 percent cited social promotion. www.edweek.com/ew/newstory.cfm?slug=25reality-c6.h21.

Amy Link: "My mentor gave me several ideas I could use or build upon."

spends half her day teaching kindergarten at Machen Elementary School and the other half administering the program. Lively coordinates and trains the mentors, provides after-school workshops for the new teachers, and presents training sessions for education students at the two partner universities.

The program also provides release time so new teachers can observe experienced teachers from other schools. Meanwhile, Kellum helps promote the program and presents at the workshops.

The mentor program, which started in September, evolved from two projects Lively and Kellum had pursued individually.

Early last year, Lively initiated a partnership with Christopher Newport University to provide classroom management training to preservice and new teachers. She received a $5,000 NEA Urban Initiative Grant for her program.

At the same time, Kellum was working with Old Dominion University and developing a program to use retired teachers as mentors for new teachers. Kellum received an $8,000 NEA-Retired grant for her program.

The two women, and their partner universities, joined forces and applied last March for an NEA Teacher Recruitment & Retention Grant from the NEA Teacher Quality Department. The project received $10,000 for planning and an additional $34,000 a year for the two-year project.

With additional matching contributions from the school system and VEA, and in-kind contributions from the two universities, the program ended up with a $110,000 yearly budget, Lively says.

The budget covers the mentor training and professional development workshops, provides substitutes for new teachers who observe at other schools, and includes a small stipend for the mentors.

Kellum, who also serves on the Hampton City School Board, says the program is a worthwhile investment.

"The bottom line is that this is a money issue as well as a teaching issue," she says. "Every time you have to train a new person who comes on board, it's an expense. If we can retain new teachers and keep these people in place we'll get significant savings." ✔

—Kristen Loschert and John O'Neil

"When the mentor comes into the classroom, there's no tenseness like when an administrator comes in."

—Hampton Education Association President Su Lively

For more on NEA Teacher Recruitment & Retention Grants, call 202/822-7350. For info on NEA-Retired Grants, go to www.nea.org/retired/grants.htm. And for more on NEA Urban Grants, go to www.nea.org/grants/urban.

KUDOS TO...

. . . the **California Teachers Association**, which in early spring kicked off a statewide advertising campaign to support CTA-sponsored legislation to give teachers the right to negotiate professional issues affecting their classrooms.

Assembly Bill 2160 would expand the California Education Employment Relations Act, which now confines the scope of bargaining to wages, hours, and working conditions.

This legislation would allow teachers to negotiate decision-making procedures around educational quality—such as developing and implementing programs to enhance student academic performance, developing educational objectives and course content, selecting textbooks and instructional materials, developing additional teacher training, and selecting evaluators and intervention teams for underperforming schools.

. . . the **Utah Education Association**, for waging a public awareness campaign to successfully defeat legislation that would have given parents up to a $2,116 tax credit for private school tuition. UEA credits its public awareness campaign—bolstered by the NEA Ballot Measure/Legislative Crisis Fund—with generating hundreds of taxpayer contacts opposing the tax subsidy of non-public schools.

. . . **Oklahoma Education Association** members, who recently packed 23 meeting halls across the state to educate lawmakers and the general public about the health care crisis they now face. Meeting participants learned that education employees receive just $69 monthly toward individual health insurance premiums, leaving most to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket to cover the balance.

Organizing this effort was the **Oklahoma Education Coalition**, which is lobbying hard for passage of House Bill 1968. That bill would fund the individual health insurance premiums for all active education employees, at an estimated cost of $114 million.

. . . **members of the Associated Faculties of the University of Maine/Maine Education Association** for ratifying a 2001-02 contract that provides a 3.5 percent salary increase and implements recommendations made by the University-AFUM Gender Equity Study. As a result of the study, more than 200 female faculty members will receive base salary adjustments totaling more than $400,000.

. . . the **Education Support Employees Association in Clark County, Nevada**, for filing a mass grievance—and a complaint with the state Employee-Management Relations Board—after the school district began deducting $2.30 per paycheck for long-term disability insurance.

The parties have resolved the dispute by agreeing to change the provider of the long-term disability insurance, keep the benefit levels unchanged, end the paycheck deduction, and reimburse each employee for the total amount deducted since October.

YOUR DUES DID IT

Need Mentor Program Tips?

The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) has produced a symposium paper, *Creating a Teacher Mentoring Program*, that addresses many of the issues and questions that NEA local affiliates, school districts, and universities should consider when developing new or improving existing mentor programs. To read this paper, go to www.nea.org/achievement/teacher/details/03.html. For NFIE grant and program information, go to www.nfie.org/grants.htm.

TEENS AND COMMUNITY: A new nonprofit organization is working nationwide to steer urban teenagers away from risky behavior and into successful community-building projects. www.pps.org/tcb/highlights.htm.

TEACHER STANDARDS: A study of Massachusetts schools suggests that while new teachers feel great pressure to meet tough educational standards, they receive little guidance on how to do so. www.gse.harvard.edu/~ngt.

STILL RECESSED: According to a new Gallup poll, 54 percent of Americans believe the economy is improving, but only 38 percent agree with Federal Reserve Board Chair Alan Greenspan that the recession is over. www.gallup.com/poll/.

STANDARDIZED TESTS: In a poll, 73 percent of K-12 students said standardized tests make them nervous, but they can handle it. Five percent said they get too nervous to take the tests. www.edweek.com/ew/newstory.cfm?slug=25reality-c1.h21.

Forget About Buying That Cape Cod on Lovely Cape Cod

Metro educators are being priced out of the housing market. One solution: Expand the HUD Teacher Next Door Program.

Walter Brooks for eCape, Inc.

Many educators working in Greater Hyannis, Massachussetts, can only dream about owning a home there. They've literally been priced out of the local housing market.

If Greater Hyannis, Massachussetts, means anything to you, it's probably Kennedys and class—lots of it. But move away from the waterfront, and you'll find another kind of class at work: the hard-working municipal employees, building trade and hospitality workers, and public educators who make the Town of Barnstable a great place to live and raise kids.

These folks, for sure, don't live in gray-shingled mansions with tennis courts. But for what they must pay for hard-to-find housing, they might as well be. Monthly rentals are creeping toward $1,000, and modest Cape Cod and ranch homes are selling in the $215,000-$260,000 range.

In response, many working Cape Codders clog Route 6 twice a day, commuting to and from the Barnstable-Yarmouth region—the fastest growing federally designated metropolitan area in the East—to other expensive metro regions like Providence and Boston.

Working Cape Codders face sobering scenarios: a stressful daily drive or the off chance of landing a pricey, moldy basement apartment.

And, if you're a new teacher on Step 1 of the salary scale with college loans to pay off, you might be facing similar choices in high-cost metro regions from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to San Jose, California. If you're an education support professional, the topic of housing may be too painful for words.

NEA Research reports that the average ESP earnings for 2001-02 is $23,321. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, one must earn a "housing wage" of at least $13.87 an hour, or $28,850 annually, to afford the U.S. Median Fair Market Rent set by the federal government for a two-bedroom rental house or apartment.

The housing issue has become a *survival* issue for ESP and teachers alike.

"Affordable housing enables educators to live and participate in the same community in which they work—as role models and links between the classroom and the community."

—NEA President Bob Chase

That's why the NEA Legislative Program now contains this language: "NEA supports federal initiatives to assist education employees in securing affordable housing."

The Teacher Next Door Program

An important first step in federal housing assistance for educators is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Teacher Next Door initiative. This program offers, at a 50 percent discount, HUD-owned homes in 900 specially designated "revitalization areas" to full-time state-certified K-12 teachers and administrators.

Better yet, eligible applicants may apply for an FHA-insured mortgage and buy a home with a down payment of only $100. They may buy directly from HUD or from a government or non-profit agency that bought the property from HUD, but HUD expects the agency to pass on the full discount to the buyer.

Homes must be located in a school district in which teachers are employed, and teachers must live in their new homes as a sole residence for at least three years after the purchase. Because demand for these homes is greater than the supply, the "winning bids" are determined through a lottery.

Recycled HUD homes don't always come problem-free—buyers must be ready to roll up their sleeves. One Virginia NEA member actually had her purchase contract voided after a HUD inspector failed to recognize and address a dangerous sewage problem.

NEA President Bob Chase has called on HUD to "give teachers assurances that the homes they purchase will be safe and affordable" and to expand Teacher Next Door program eligibility to ESP and teachers in Head Start and child development centers.

All in all, NEA supports this program, Chase says, "because it enables dedicated educators to live and participate in the same community in which they work. NEA members living in the neighborhood can serve as mentors, role models, and links between the classroom and the community."

In addition, NEA supports several bipartisan bills, now pending in Congress, to open up homeownership to public employees.

One bill authorizes 1 percent down payments on FHA mortgage loans for elementary and secondary teachers and public safety officers who buy homes within the jurisdiction of their employing agencies, while another piece of legislation makes these employees eligible

for discounts on more HUD-owned single family homes.

'The Right Thing To Do'

School districts can't wait patiently for Congress to act on affordable housing when they're facing record teacher retirements and the need to recruit new educators *now*. Here's what NEA local affiliates and administrators are doing in two costly Cape Cod communities:

• The 850-member **Barnstable Teachers Association**—which has negotiated $30,000 starting pay for teachers and three paid college courses per year for teaching assistants—works with the district administration to find housing for new hires.

When truant and equity officer John Reed, the BTA vice president, isn't helping the district with recruitment, he's dealing with realtors, private owners, and renters with leases about to expire to locate decent, affordable rentals for newcomers.

"We've been successful," Reed reports. "We get 20 new people a year. Some stay with relatives, some share space with other members, and others rent or lease.

"We try and show these people we're a welcoming local that wants them here," he stresses, "and we advise them not to buy a house until they have professional status, tenure, and are secure about their future. You can't encourage young people to stay unless you reach out to them!"

• By bargaining to reduce the number of steps in the salary scale, the 465-member **Falmouth Education Association** has boosted starting teacher pay to more than $32,000. And through participation in a labor-management Health Insurance Advisory Committee, FEA and other town unions have secured higher employer insurance contributions, more plan choice, and customized individual coverage.

Even with all that, new educators still can't buy a decent place to live.

"The cost of living here is high and the rental market has dried up, even in the winter," says FEA President Steve Russell, a seventh grade math teacher at Lawrence Middle School. "Our town realizes the need to pay higher salaries, and they're ahead of the game in realizing the need for affordable housing."

At press time, the Falmouth town government was urging voters to approve a $3 million bond issue to help finance the purchase of up to 50 existing houses over two years, for lease to low- and moderate-income families—including those of public employees.

"Providing adequate housing for the workforce in the community is just the right thing to do," stresses Falmouth Housing Corporation Executive Director Robert Murray.

No one can say it better than that. ✔

—Dave Winans

For more on the HUD Teacher Next Door Program, go to www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/reo/tnd/tnd.cfm.

Floridians Rally To 'Tell Truth' About Public Schools

Since when is a cut
Time to tell the Truth
49TH in Education
Time to tell the Truth
49TH in Education Spending
Time to tell the Truth

Florida Education Association

The signs of these teachers and ESPs say it all. Florida is now 49th in per capita spending on education.

After months of official misinformation on the state of education in Florida, more than 1,500 teachers and education support professionals converged on Tallahassee's Capitol building in February to tell the *real* story of Florida's public schools.

"When Governor Jeb Bush repeatedly says the education budget has increased—while school districts throughout the state are making drastic classroom cuts—it's obvious what we as educators must do. It's time to tell the truth about what's happening in our public schools," Florida Education Association President Maureen Dinnen told the demonstrators. "The governor's rosy scenario has meant nothing but thorns for our classrooms."

During the demonstration, FEA revealed these grim facts about education in Florida: The average pupil-teacher ratio in Florida schools has dropped from 39th to 43rd, and teacher pay has fallen from 26th to 29th. Moreover, Florida's per capita spending on education has fallen from 36th to 49th, and spending on higher education has fallen to 46th from 44th.

When confronted with the truth about Florida's public schools in the Cornerstone Report on education, Governor Bush simply addressed the problems with an edit.

The report's authors had concluded, "Additional funding is needed for educational programs at all levels." Bush deleted those words from the report.

"Florida's educators won't allow the truth to be deleted from the education debate," Dinnen concluded in her rally remarks. ✔

NEAFT Partnership Council Charts Ambitious Agenda

Health care costs, school vouchers, low-performing schools, and the new education bill passed by Congress are among the key topics that the NEAFT Partnership Joint Council will work on in the coming months.

At its second meeting in late January in Washington, D.C., the 30-member Joint Council, which includes the executive committees of both the AFT and NEA, created subcommittees of members and staff to develop specific recommendations for action at the group's spring meeting, scheduled for April 23-24.

These recommendations will focus on strategies to contain member health care costs; counter private school vouchers and tuition tax credits; help improve low-performing/priority schools; shape and help affiliates deal with federal, state, and local implementation of the recently passed Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA); and suggested projects for joint organizing. The challenges of preparing for changes in ESEA, particularly those relating to Title I, are getting immediate attention from both organizations. Presidents and top staff from Minnesota, Montana, and Florida described their roads to merger and the successes and challenges that unity presents in their states. The Joint Council also heard reports from leaders of the Teacher Union Reform Network (TURN) and the NEAFT September 11 Fund, as well as from both organizations' staff.

The Joint Council agreed to explore ways of working more closely with TURN, a network of some 25 AFT and NEA locals, as well as fostering similar networks of AFT and NEA locals.

The September 11 Fund continues to accept contributions for the families of both AFT and NEA members affected by the terrorist attacks. Contributions can be sent to the NEAFT September 11 Fund, Dept. 0033, Washington, DC 20042-0033.

The chairs of the Jurisdictional Agreement Implementation Committee reported that, by the end of January, eight states had formally approved no-raid agreements, one had reached an oral agreement, and six were drafting such agreements. ✔

For the complete text of the NEAFT Partnership Joint Council Communiqué, go to www.nea.org/aboutnea/neaft/.

RIGHTS WATCH

Supreme Court Upholds Peer Grading

High Court rejects parent's claim that the practice violates students' rights.

In a striking victory for teacher autonomy, a unanimous Supreme Court ruled that the common practice of having students grade each other's papers does not violate federal law.

The February 19, 2002, ruling reverses a controversial decision by the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals that peer grading violates the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). That's a 26-year-old federal law that prohibits schools from disclosing to third parties a student's "educational records" without parental consent.

The case arose when Kristja J. Falvo, the mother of three students enrolled in the Owasso (Oklahoma) Independent School District, learned that several of her children's teachers occasionally used students to grade one another's work and to call out their grades.

When her complaints about the practice fell on deaf ears, Falvo sued the district and various administrators, charging that the grading practice embarrassed her children and violated FERPA.

The Tenth Circuit in *Owasso Independent School District v. Falvo* upheld her claims, but the U.S. Supreme Court reversed the decision.

In an opinion by Justice Kennedy, the Court recognized that peer grading can be a valuable educational tool. "It is a way to teach material again in a new context," and it enables the teacher to discover "whether the students have understood the material and are ready to move on," the Court said.

The Court also stressed that a ruling prohibiting teachers from using peer grading "would impose substantial burdens on teachers across the country.

"It would force all instructors to take time, which otherwise could be spent teaching and in preparation, to correct an assortment of daily student assignments," the Court concluded.

Finally, the Court emphasized that to sustain the lower court's opinion would empower the federal government to "exercise minute control over specific teaching methods...in classrooms throughout the country" and would "effect a drastic alteration of the existing allocation of responsibilities between states and the national government in the operation of the nation's schools."

The 2001 NEA Representative Assembly adopted a New Business Item expressing the association's "strong opposition" to the Tenth Circuit's decision in the Falvo case. In response, NEA filed a friend-of-the-court brief urging the Supreme Court to throw out the lower court ruling.

While noting that "many teachers" have found peer grading to be "educationally beneficial," the NEA brief emphasized that the practice has not been "universally embraced by all teachers."

The brief went on to argue that "the question of whether to engage in this practice...is uniquely suited to local resolution by teachers and school districts," rather than by Congress or the courts. Happily, the Supreme Court agreed.

As always, there's a caveat. Despite the Supreme Court ruling, a school district still may decide on its own to ban the practice. Depending on state law, however, the district may be required to bargain over the issue before implementing such a policy.

The Supreme Court's decision in the Falvo case can be found on the Web at: www.supremecourtus.gov/opinions/01slipopinion.html. ✔

–Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

Taking a Stand for Integrity

NEA member resigns over school board vote to ignore plagiarism.

Christine Pelton, the former second-year teacher from Piper, Kansas, quit her job after the local school board overturned her decision to punish students for cheating on a major class assignment.

In explaining her principled stance, Pelton said that one of the roles of teachers is to teach students "to be honest people, to have integrity, to listen, to be good citizens....I'm not expecting more than what would be expected of them either at home or down the road."

The school board's action has created a firestorm of controversy in this small community and garnered a remarkable amount of media attention.

The assignment Pelton gave to her 118 science students was to collect and study 20 different leaves, prepare a written report about each, and present the findings in an oral report to the class. The assignment would count for 50 percent of the semester grade.

To save time, many students used the Internet, and Pelton noticed that some of the written reports contained identical passages. So she used a computer program she found at http://turnitin.com and discovered that 28 students had copied substantial portions of their reports directly from Web sites.

The punishment for first offense cheating, according to school board policy, is no credit for the assignment. In addition, Pelton had required parents and students to sign copies of her classroom rules, which included the notice that "cheating and plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment;...all work turned in by the student [must be] completely their own." So the 28 students who plagiarized their reports received a zero.

And then the parents complained. To their credit, both Pelton's principal and her superintendent supported her decision. But meeting behind closed doors last December, the school board voted to overturn Pelton's judgment and ordered her to give all of the offending students partial credit for the assignment and to reduce the assignment's value from 50 to 30 percent of the semester grade.

The next day, according to media reports, some of Pelton's students taunted and ridiculed her. "I went to my class and tried to teach the kids, but they hollered and said, 'We don't have to listen to you anymore'," Pelton said. "They knew if they didn't like anything in my classroom from here on out, they [could] just go to the school board and complain."

Pelton resigned from her job several days later. Despite the intense media scrutiny that followed, school board members refused to offer any explanation or to reconsider their action.

The controversy continues. One parent started a recall petition to oust the sitting board members. In late February, the Wyandotte County District Attorney filed charges accusing the seven school board members of violating the Kansas Open Meetings Act by ordering the grade changes in a secret, executive session.

Pelton's principal has announced his resignation and other teachers have threatened to leave as well. All 12 deans at Kansas State University signed a letter to the Piper School Board complaining that the board has "unwittingly encouraged and rewarded dishonesty."

And what of Christine Pelton? After a one-and-a-half-year teaching career, she has left the profession and plans to open a day care center in her home. ✔

–Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

INTERVIEW

Public Education's Unsung Heroes

NEA president reflects on quality issues and a 'lifeline' to students.

Karen Kilgarin

Upon taking office in 1996, NEA President Bob Chase led a bold push to expand traditional union responsibilities to include issues related to the quality of education. Now, as his second and final term comes to a close, he reflects on the impact of "new unionism" and how educators can work more closely with parents, in an interview with NEA Today's *John O'Neil.*

You've advocated for 'new unionism.' What's at the heart of this concept?
It's making sure that issues of quality—quality teachers, quality support staff, and quality educational opportunities for kids—are as important to us as traditional union responsibilities.

Schools don't exist for our members to have jobs, or for politicians to climb up political ladders, or for entrepreneurs to make money. They exist to educate children. That's our primary mission. And the better we do that, the better it is for us as members and as professionals. The best way to ensure our job security is to make sure that the product of our work—an educated child—is as good as possible.

How have NEA members responded to your focus on these issues?
It's interesting—issues that created lots of discussion five years ago just don't provoke a debate. They seem to have become part of our culture.

For example?
The issue of accountability. Peer assistance and review programs. Promoting National Board certification to the degree that we promote it. Emphasizing negotiations that are more collaborative, more interest-based. NEA is now structured around three primary areas: student achievement, teacher and support professional quality, and school system capacity. That's our thrust.

That doesn't mean that we back away from making sure that our members' rights are protected. We work very hard for quality salaries and working conditions. In reality, those things are very important components of student achievement. We're not going to have quality student achievement unless we have quality teachers. We're not going to have schools that run appropriately unless we have quality support staff. We're not going to be able to succeed unless we build the capacity of school systems to provide appropriate conditions for our members and for the students we teach.

I think our members were absolutely ready to do all this stuff. They needed to have their organization push for it and help them achieve that.

What are some challenges?
One of the biggest is school governance. The tenure of a superintendent is short, school board members rotate in and out. You need some mechanism—preferably a contract—to sustain these new arrangements, because you can't create a new culture in a local setting overnight. It takes time and commitment. And when new people come on the scene, it's susceptible to the vagaries of change for change's sake.

You recently finished a book for parents. What do educators need to know about parents to have a good partnership?
Parents want what's best for their child but don't necessarily know how to help in schools. When I went to my first parents night for my daughter, I thought I knew what to do, having participated in so many of them as a teacher. But it was different being on the other side of the table. If I felt that way as an educator, think how parents feel!

So teachers need to be empathetic to parents' perspectives.
Absolutely. We have to understand that parenting is the hardest job in the world—to do it right, it's 24 hours a day, seven days a week, forever.

Every parent has had school experiences, and some of those experiences aren't good. The bad things usually are in the back of their minds. A lot of immigrants come from countries where school was seen as an arm of the government, and they may not have liked the government. So they are especially leery about schools, and we have to help them get over that.

What are some of the barriers to effective partnerships, and what can teachers do to surmount them?
Everyone needs to work to make schools a more welcoming place for parents.

You know, when a parent comes into the school, they are told to go to a central office, and one of the first things they'll typically see is a list of rules that—in a lot of places—are written in the negative. You run into this bureaucracy as soon as you go in. It's not welcoming or warm. A lot of schools now are developing parent rooms, which is a terrific idea.

What else?
We can't continue to approach parents the same way we always have. The world of parenting is different. Where there are two-parent families, both parents work. Where there's a single-parent family, that parent may work several jobs. It doesn't work any more to schedule a meeting with parents in the afternoon at school. School districts and our unions have to work together to create different ways of dealing with parents.

Some parents are taking an active role on the testing issue—for example, keeping their children home on days when high-stakes tests are being given. Do you see parents joining teachers to push for a sensible approach to testing?
Yes, I think parents want to make sure that testing is going to help their kid. And if these high-stakes tests don't measure what's being taught, and they don't tell a parent how well their child is doing on specific skills, then they're going to question the purpose of it.

Testing seems to be the foremost issue on many teachers' minds these days.
Teachers feel so hamstrung by tests that don't do what they should do. Assessment is very important, but assessments should inform instruction. They shouldn't be used to grade a school. We have to really push to ensure that assessment is used appropriately.

You've visited scores of schools as NEA president. What's given you hope?
The dedication of people who work in schools. Lots of our members work in terrible conditions: rundown schools, huge class sizes, lack of financial and administrative support. Too often, parental involvement is minimal. There are members out there who are working against incredible odds and succeeding. We keep hearing negative stuff about schools, but more students are now taking rigorous courses, more students are going on to some form of postsecondary education, and more students than ever are finishing school.

This year I visited what NEA calls "high-priority" schools. They are in the toughest circumstances and are often the schools being portrayed in negative ways. When you see them up close, though, you see the caring and the earnestness in the teaching that goes on there.

Teachers and support staff realize they are the lifeline for a lot of kids. That makes the work of our members vitally important. They don't receive the kind of kudos that they should. But they are the unsung heroes. ✔

Coming Soon in Print
Bob Chase's new book, *The New Public School Parent*, will be released July 31 from Penguin Books. To preorder a copy, go to www.amazon.com.

Community Connections

A curriculum uses oral histories and other local resources to teach children about their world.

Alden Pellett

Sweet maple syrup. Valleys dotted with dairy cows. Quaint villages where generations live side by side. You couldn't ask for a better setting than Vermont to develop an interdisciplinary curriculum that draws from a community's natural and cultural heritage, says former middle school teacher **Mark Skelding**.

Luckily, adds Skelding, Vermont is just one of many places rich in the kinds of living traditions that students everywhere can use to better understand their world. And so he's written a 200-page, step-by-step guide to show teachers how to help forge the connection between students and their community.

With co-authors Martin Kemple and Joseph Kiefer, Skelding has stuffed the book, *Living Traditions*, with sample projects, unit outlines, and sample forms that can be photocopied, so teachers don't have to reinvent the wheel.

Part of a series of place-based curriculum guides, *Living Traditions* gets its inspiration from "the very authentic learning opportunities" in our own backyards, says Skelding. "From the aspect of child development, it makes sense to start there."

It particularly makes sense to include local residents because, ultimately, they "drive the curriculum—they're not add-ons," says Skelding. The manual recommends identifying a community coordinator, perhaps a parent or elder volunteer, and offers suggestions for preparing students and community members for their time together.

Even simple activities like gathering for tea and cookies can start to bridge the gap between young and old. And this, says Skelding, makes activities such as building a watershed model, storytelling by elders, or producing documentaries—all noted in the book—meaningful and fun.

Skelding concedes the curriculum may work better in rural areas, where youngsters grow up with a sense of place. But "even in highly transient areas, students can explore the connection between cultural and natural heritage," he says. Because most teachers don't hail from the communities where they work, the guide also includes tips on researching local history.

Elementary and middle schools are the curriculum's biggest users, but Skelding says high schools are drawn to its service-learning component.

For more: Contact Food Works at 800/310-1515 or foodwork@together.net.

Cherie Diez

Hard Facts About Achievement

It's not enough to set high standards and test students, says Educational Testing Service researcher **Paul Barton.** *Student behavior and social attitudes also must be addressed before American students begin to do better academically. Barton explores these issues in the recently released ETS publication,* Facing the Hard Facts in Education Reform.

What is the trend in student behavior?

Student behavior that is disruptive to the learning environment is growing. Gang presence at schools has also increased, and there's been a disproportionate impact on Black and Hispanic students. Research shows that this not only compromises student achievement but also likely reduces the number of people willing to enter or continue in the teaching profession.

Is academic achievement sufficiently valued in our culture?

Teachers want the best from their students, and they deliver strong messages to try hard. But they need more help from the other players in students' lives—parents, peers, even characters in sitcoms. The hard fact is that right now American culture is not really a learning culture, at least not in the K-12 period of life.

Does this mean there is little we can do?

Opinion polls put education at the top of the list of public concerns. But this has to translate into improving the quality of education by paying professional wages and advancing professional development. We need a strong signal from the public that education really does matter.

For more: Visit www.ets.org/research/pic/facingfacts.pdf.

Learning to Help Kids Who've Seen War

George Moore

Inspired by two sisters from Sierra Leone, bilingual teacher **Pat Quinteros** is following her heart: She's creating a video to help educators meet the special needs of immigrant students from war-ravaged countries.

"We weren't prepared to serve these children," says Quinteros, remembering her first staff meeting after the two girls arrived a couple years ago at Pine Grove Manor School in Somerset, New Jersey. "We didn't really understand the situation they were coming from."

Like other immigrants in the K-3 school, the sisters ended up in Quinteros' small bilingual class. But their trauma, and that of others from Sierra Leone, seemed particularly severe.

"We have students who hide under their desks or run into a closet when a teacher raises her voice," says Quinteros. "Some are orphans who, before coming to New Jersey, were living on the streets, witnessing murder. They've never been in school; some don't know how old they are."

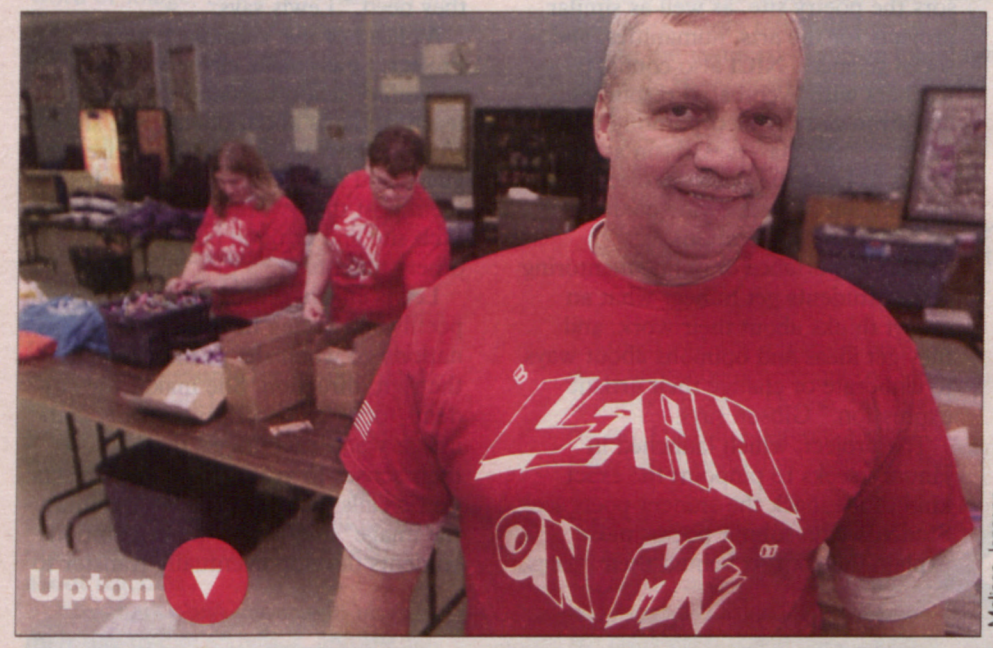
With a $1,000 learning grant from the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education in hand, Quinteros and several colleagues set out to capture the real-life stories of students who escaped the brutality of their native lands.

Because her own students were too young to interview, Quinteros found local high school students and family members willing to talk about their torment: firebombed homes, weeks fleeing through the bush and eating roots, years living in refugee camps.

Quinteros intends to use the tape and written resource materials—all available this spring—in professional development workshops. And she wants regular teachers and guidance counselors—not just bilingual or ESL teachers—to use them.

"I want to create awareness and spark a dialogue," says Quinteros. For these children, she adds, "We just have to keep in mind what they've been through. We need to be extra kind."

For more: E-mail Quinteros at patkry@aol.com. Go to www.nfie.org for information on NFIE grants.



Melissa Janssen

Shoulders to Lean On

The school year started off especially rough at Burlington High School in Iowa. A senior died in an alcohol-related death just before classes started, and about three weeks later, the school was devastated by a fatal accident involving the girl's volleyball team. Then came the events of September 11, adding anger to a school already dealing with sadness, remorse, and confusion.

Things started to change, though, when the school group, Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), led by teacher **James Upton**, held an assembly in September that ended with students and staff joining hands. What started out as a simple gesture of solidarity and strength soon became a small phenomenon: Lean on Me, a school-based support group for staff and students, was born.

Now, once a month, Burlington High students have a place to talk about whatever might be troubling them, and staff is always there for guidance. "I think the kids get a feeling of comfort knowing people are always there to help," says Upton.

So far, about 300 of Burlington's 1,450 students have joined the Lean on Me effort. Many wear red T-shirts on the 11th of each month; some wear them on other days to signal they are available to talk.

The results have been so encouraging that students are now spreading the word to other schools and colleges that are considering support groups of their own.

For more: Contact James Upton at 319/753-2211.

Mentoring by the Book

For years, the Massachusetts Teachers Association has supported the mentoring of new public school teachers by their veteran peers. So it was great news last year when the state passed a law requiring all school districts to institute mentoring programs. Unfortunately, many didn't take up the call, and the state failed to enforce the new regulation.

That's when the MTA's Center for Educational Quality and Professional Development (CEQPD) stepped up to the plate to make mentoring a reality.

"Our view was that no one knows what's truly needed in a mentoring program like front-line teachers themselves," says Kathleen Skinner, director of CEQPD. "Our new teachers wanted mentoring, and plenty of long-time teachers were willing to volunteer their time. But the state mandate wasn't going anywhere." So, she says, CEQPD decided to design a handbook that might nudge school districts along. The idea: Don't just talk about it, *show* administrators how to create mentoring programs they can adapt to their individual needs.

The result was *Charting a Course: a Mentor Program Handbook*, a user-friendly book published this year by MTA. The step-by-step guide includes everything from background research to the fine points of actually building a mentoring program.

The book, says Skinner, was a collaborative effort of the MTA staff, and the excitement over it is palpable. "Administrators and district representatives are calling us to express their enthusiasm—as are teachers, who want to take part as mentors," she says.

Nora Todd, chief author, says the idea for the book came from a New Jersey Education Association handbook on the basics of mentoring.

"We wanted to go further—to produce a tool that could get mentoring programs off the ground," she says. "I think we truly succeeded."

For more: E-mail Todd at ntodd@massteacher.org or call 617/878-8232.

Taking Poems Out of Hiding

Vermont Poetry Project connects student poets with online mentors.

"Poems hide," according to Naomi Shihab Nye's poem *Valentines for Earnest Mann*. "They are the shadows drifting across our ceilings the moment before we wake up."

If poems are indeed hiding, then Carla Kotas Lewis helps students find them. Lewis, an elementary school teacher in Fayston, Vermont, heads the Vermont Poetry Project. The program lets students in the 1st through 12th grades post their poetry on a Web site for other students, teachers, and poetry mentors across the state.

The Web site, which participants access with a username and password, provides a secure location where students and teachers can read student-written poems and offer constructive criticism. Teachers help students select poems for the site and also monitor feedback.

As a lifetime lover of poetry, Lewis was excited when David Gibson of the National Institute for Community Innovations asked her to work on the project. Based in Vermont, NICI sponsors the poetry site, as well as similar projects for the arts, humanities, and social sciences. NICI also connects teachers with Web-based resources and strategies for incorporating technology into their classes. Gibson asked Lewis to head the poetry project after meeting her at a statewide conference on e-learning applications.

"The importance of online mentoring is that students get to hear what an expert thinks about their work, and they get ideas and opinions about ways to elaborate or change their artistic expression," Gibson says.

The project, which launched in January, seeks to pinpoint the exact kind of feedback the student poets seek. Students who submit poems must explain the context behind their pieces. They also can ask for help with specific parts of their poems.

"Sometimes kids will just ask what others think the title of the poem should be, but we're trying to get them to focus more on taking charge of their own feedback by telling us exactly what they need," Lewis says.

As head of the Vermont Poetry Project, Lewis visits elementary and secondary schools around the state to teach students about poetry. She shows students how to write with precise language and free verse. She also helps them post their work to the poetry Web site and critique poems from other students.

Lewis enjoys getting students to write poems and seeing how far their imaginations go when she pushes them in the right direction. She makes the students focus on descriptive words and imagery and encourages them to use their senses to visualize certain objects. Lewis calls these exercises "stretching the image" and hopes the descriptions students develop eventually transfer to

Students can access the mentor site through NICI's Web page at www.nici-mc2.org.

Idea Exchange

Literature Letters

In a project I call literature letters my students choose a book to read with a partner. The students divide the book into four sections. After they read the first section, they write letters explaining that section to their partners. The partners write back and ask questions about the book. This interchange helps the students concentrate on the events of the story because they know they must explain them in their letters.

They write letters for all four sections of the book and give copies to me to read. This lets me check their comprehension and develop their writing skills.

Carol Aten
Belle Vernon, Pennsylvania

Foam Manipulatives

If your school or district has an Ellison letter cutter, you can make a variety of inexpensive and durable math manipulatives using craft foam. Craft foam sheets are available for less than a dollar per sheet from most craft stores. You can find templates to make tangrams, pentominoes, pattern blocks, and fraction circles. After you get the foam, use a paper cutter to cut it to fit into the Ellison. You can make enough manipulatives for an entire class with very little investment. You also can use the letter templates and other designs to make attractive bulletin boards with a 3-D effect.

Marta Haakenson
Grand Junction, Colorado

Secret Story Words

I put the names of people, places, things, and vocabulary words from a story we've read on small pieces of paper and tape them to my students' backs. They wander around the room asking their classmates yes and no questions to try and figure out their words.

When they've figured out what their words are, they return to their seats and write down how their words relate to the story.

When everyone has finished, we review each student's word, starting with the first person who guessed his or her secret story word correctly.

Janice Roehr
Middletown, Rhode Island

Works4Me
nea's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

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- By phone: 202/822-7201
- By fax: 202/822-7206
- By E-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org
- Through the Web: www.nea.org/neatoday

Alden Pellett

NEA member Carla Lewis helps students post their work on the poetry project's Web site.

their writing.

Lewis also encourages her students to read good poetry. Reading good poetry does not mean dissecting every word or image, Lewis says. Instead she wants students to establish a personal connection with a poem.

"I don't want them to be lost when they read a poem, and I don't expect every poem to speak to them," she says.

In addition to her work on the Vermont Poetry Project, Lewis is also the state's Christa McAuliffe Fellow. As a fellow, she works with teachers and the Vermont Department of Education to revise the state's existing reading and literature standards. Lewis serves as a resource for schools developing standards-based units and other projects focused on Vermont's school reform agenda.

Even though Lewis has 25 years of classroom experience, her fellowship has given her a broader perspective about teaching.

"Teachers often get caught up in their day-to-day activities, and the fellowship gave me a unique chance to step back and see what I do and why," she says.

Lewis will return to her multi-age third and fourth grade class at Fayston Elementary School this fall, where she will continue to manage the online mentoring program. She hopes the project will encourage students to keep writing poetry.

"I love reading great poetry," Lewis says. "I hope the students will draw something from their peers' poems that motivates them to take their own poems out of hiding." ✔

—Urmila Subramanyam

For more: E-mail Carla Lewis at cakole@aol.com or visit the National Institute for Community Innovations Web site at www.nici-mc2.org.

[DILEMMA]

How do you keep students from losing ground over the summer?

On the last day of school, I send home a summer packet of various skills students can work on that includes handwriting, math, and language arts activities. If the children return the completed packet at the beginning of the next school year, they receive a small token, such as a pencil or scented stickers.

Karen Phillips
Primary teacher
Arnold, Maryland

■ Many teachers have their students keep a journal for writing daily events. Why not extend that writing into the summer? Students can write accounts of vacations, family reunions, movies, and other summer activities. Not only is it a good way to maintain written communication skills, but it also may become a family project without the stress and time constraints of the school year.

Jan Phillips
Elementary special education teacher
Woodruff, South Carolina

■ The teacher with whom I work and I send home a summer work folder filled with activities and worksheets students use to "play school" during the summer. We have found that many students really enjoy and look forward to receiving their summer folders. We also encourage students to read by sending home books without expecting students to return them!

Victoria Barry
Elementary intervention assistant
Mentor, Ohio

■ I meet with my students' parents each spring before we get out for summer vacation. During the annual review, I give the parents a list of things to do with their child over the summer, such as counting change, telling time, checking for certain things in the newspaper and on TV, talking about weather facts, and using the calendar. These are skills we practice daily during the school year.

Another thing I do to promote summer learning is engage the students in a "clean up" at the end of the year. They go home with magazines, workbooks, leftover activity sheets, old calendars, and partially used school supplies.

Susan Randall
High school special education teacher
Lancaster, South Carolina

■ I send a couple of postcards and letters to students during the summer with suggestions for books to read, basic facts, games to play, and encouragement to prepare for the coming year. The children seem to enjoy getting mail. Some of them use the helpful hints, and those that don't can start the new year feeling like they know me.

Betty Hawker
Fifth grade teacher
Carlsbad, New Mexico

■ I make a calendar for August that has activities my students can do every day of the month until school starts. At the end of the year I tell students to take a vacation from school in June and July. They can read books and practice their cursive writing and math if they choose, but they are to have fun during those months. Then starting August 1 they use the calendar to get ready for school again. I teach second grade, so the activity on August 1 is to say the alphabet. On August 2 they count to 100. Each day adds more and more ideas. By the time school starts the students have read several books, completed several worksheets, and can remember most of the things they learned from second grade. They are ready to start third grade and have had fun preparing for it.

Ruth Schlosser
Second grade teacher
Pontiac, Illinois

■ I work with students who have special needs and they are, by law, given the opportunity to attend summer school. My students require constant repetition in all learning situations. So during these summer sessions, we review classroom rules for days until the students can repeat them or demonstrate that they understand them.

Ted Pitts

We repeat many physical tasks, like touring the building and filling out bathroom passes. When it comes to academics, we review and reinforce the skills they already have learned, then we move forward if possible.

Barbara Morris
Middle school integration paraeducator
Wilmington, Delaware

Got an Answer?

How do you get parents involved at your school?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@list.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Include your name, city, state, and job title. If published, you will receive an *NEA Today* mug!

'If I wrote the law...'

Educators speak out on what *they'd* put in a sweeping education law.

Dan Cepeda

Teachers need smaller classes so they can "reach every child every day," says kindergarten teacher Jennifer Black.

The reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act—The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001—will affect every educator in the nation. The past two issues of NEA Today *have reported on what the law states and what members think of it. This month, members offer their views on what the law would look like if* they *had written it.*

No student should be in a high school with more than 1,000 kids. Motiva-tion is 80 percent of this job. A child needs to feel, "If I get hurt, it matters to people." Then that child will care about the work. And it's much easier to build human relationships in a smaller institution.

Kristin Botello
High school English teacher
Los Angeles, California

Kristin Botello

The best way to ensure that "no child is left behind" is to ensure that no child gets behind in the first place. That means the federal government must work with state governments, local school districts, and social service agencies to provide early childhood education, medical assistance, and other preventive programs to make students' playing fields as level as possible. We simply must stop the ridiculous debate about whether class size makes a difference. Of course smaller class sizes are more expensive, but the cost of students getting and then staying behind is infinitely higher.

Patrick Campbell
Middle school special education teacher
Rochester, Minnesota

Carolyn Grice

I would write a law that reflects the fact that all young people don't learn in the same ways. It isn't possible for every child to be reading by the end of third grade. Poverty, abuse, and mental and physical challenges all impact a youngster's readiness to learn. The amount of gray matter given by the Creator also plays a role.

I would write a law that provides adequate funding for professional development. Money should not be taken away from a school trying to meet the needs of those students who struggle the most.

Carolyn Grice
Student and community services specialist
Omaha, Nebraska

'We need to reach every child every day.'

"Children are the message we send to a time we will not see." (author unknown)

If we are to send a message of success and accomplishment, we need to be an educational society that is fair, competitive, and compassionate. For that, we need personal contact and time.

Time is our most precious commodity. We need time to be fair! We need time to be compassionate! We need time to teach! I am not asking for longer school days or all-year school. I am asking for smaller classes. If we are to leave no child behind, we need to reach every child every day.

Jennifer Black
Kindergarten teacher
Sheridan, Wyoming

I teach ninth grade world history. To me, leaving no child behind means that every student who enters my classroom will be able to read and write at the ninth grade level. I have a dozen students who cannot read or write. They are doomed to fail most of their high school courses.

Our system IEPs mandate that teachers read tests to students who cannot read or write. When are these kids going to be taught to read or write? If we don't do it, who will?

Jerry Mower
History teacher
Bedford, Wyoming

I am the new guardian of a 16-year-old girl. She has been left behind, but not by the schools. It is true her school performance is terrible, but that is because of the failures of her parents and of our society.

Her father kicked her out of his house and dumped her on her mother's doorstep. The girl was chronically truant because her mother was incapable of ensuring she got to school. She has used marijuana and alcohol. She had sex with a boy she doesn't even know. It is late in the game to help this child. If we are to leave no child behind, we must intervene far sooner.

If we are to leave no child behind, we must love them. How do we legislate that?

High school math teacher
Name and address withheld by request

I wouldn't leave behind gifted children. They deserve an education plan that will challenge them at their level just as much as any other child.

Sue Burgard
Pierre, South Dakota

To leave no child behind, we must abolish high-stakes testing. The law fails to address economic disparity, which impacts student scores for all standardized tests. We have already left many students behind based on the results of state tests. Now, with federally mandated tests, we will leave even more students behind.

Maggie Hagan
Fifth grade teacher
Youngstown, Ohio

'To help struggling students, we need to help struggling families'

The idea of "No Child Left Behind" is wonderful. It ranks right up there with world peace and curing world hunger. Everybody would love to see these dreams come true. But we will never see any of these in our lifetime. We are asking children to come to school without any family support. They have problems that are so pressing, the idea of learning is ridiculous. If we want to help struggling students, we need to help struggling families.

Garry Norberg
High school math teacher
White River, South Dakota

I would establish family literacy centers in every neighborhood so reading and math could be taught to every family

member regardless of age. These centers would offer free materials for home use.

Martha Mitchell
Preschool teacher
Zanesville, Ohio

I teach students with multiple handicaps. To base "No Child Left Behind" on test scores automatically leaves my students behind. Students with severe conditions can learn and progress, but they do so in their own way and at their own pace. Each of my students should be evaluated based on his or her past progress and no one else's.

Jan Christian
Special education teacher
Avery County, North Carolina

We should design a compulsory parenting curriculum for 1st through 12th grades that teaches people how to raise babies. These courses should include lessons on sexual abstinence. I teach seventh and eighth graders and they already are sexually active. We have many girls who become pregnant. They have no idea that abstinence should be part of their lives because there are no adults in their lives to tell them so. We will never make a difference in our communities until we make a difference in our families.

Teresa Bonasso
Middle school teacher
Dayton, Ohio

I would implement daily milk breaks for all students. We grew up with this and it provided a nutritional snack that helped us be alert and ready for lessons.

Gay Ekberg
Speech and language pathologist
Elbow Lake, Minnesota

'The whole village needs to be shaped up, not just the village school.'

The law would say that all children are entitled to a warm bed, healthy meals, clothes that fit, kind words, baths, sports and music activities, medical attention, rules in the home that are followed consistently, and home and school programs for which parents are required to show up.

The public schools have kids only six to eight hours a day, 180 to 185 days a year. Parents need to be home with their children after school and in the evenings, providing the structure they need to succeed in school.

If it is true it takes a village to raise a child, the whole village needs to be shaped up, not just the village school.

Connie Krezelok
Elementary school social worker
Sheridan, Wyoming

For more: Go to the NEA Legislative Action Center at www.nea.org/lac/esea or call NEA's ESEA hotline at 866/373-ESEA (3732). Send Alain Jehlen, ajehlen@nea.org, your ideas on how we can leave no child behind.

[DILEMMA]

How do you deal with a colleague who isn't pulling his or her weight?

I think there are two ways to deal with a colleague who is not pulling his or her weight. One way would be to do the work yourself. The tasks get accomplished on your own terms, but with unfair fatigue and possible resentment. The second way would be to speak to the person in a subtle manner ("Hey, we need to get this done") or an overt manner ("I'm doing this, you do that") to delegate a fair share of the work. You can debrief at a later date to encourage continued cooperation. Perhaps the colleague will catch on to the grand scheme of sharing tasks.

Ellen Levy
Seventh grade teacher
Buffalo Grove, Illinois

■ Perhaps the offender doesn't even know he or she is offending. Talk to the person and say how you feel. You don't have to condemn the person. It's possible to just state how you feel about the behavior. You could say "I really feel like I'm doing double duty when I supervise your class as well as mine in the morning. Could you get to your room a little sooner?" From the reaction you get, you'll have a better idea how to proceed. You may even have to mention the problem to an administrator if it's really bad or dangerous.

Flo Pelaschier
Fourth and fifth grade teacher
Mullica Hill, New Jersey

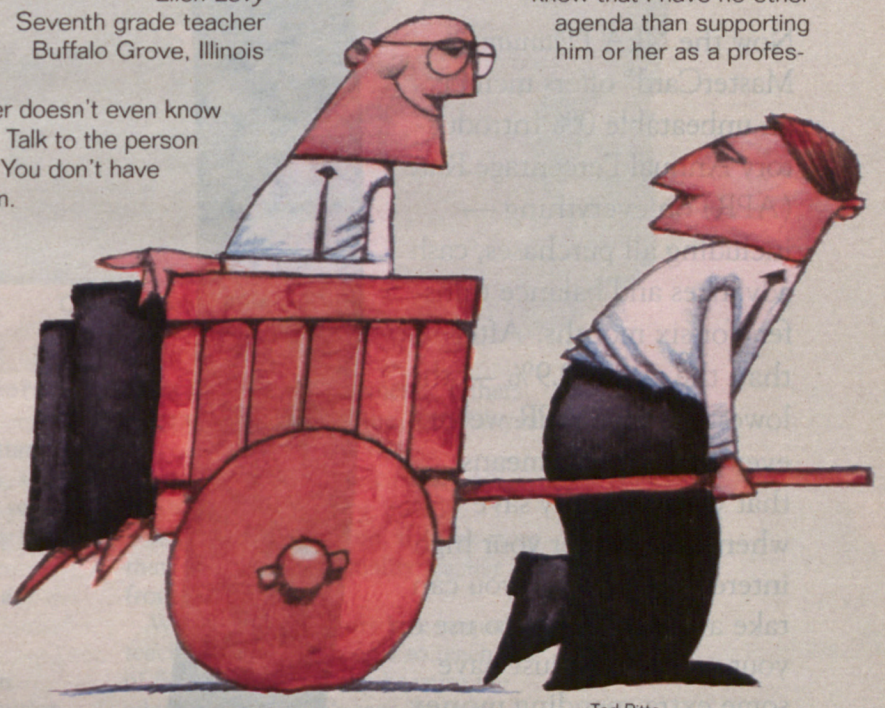
■ Recommend a sick leave incentive to your school district that awards a certain amount of money for a certain number of days or months worked without using sick leave. For example, if you don't miss work from September to the winter break you get a $100 bonus. If you don't miss any days from January to May you get another $100. I am sure it will have a positive effect.

Frank "Kiko" Chavez
Maintenance worker
Bernalillo, New Mexico

■ One good thing would be to try and get to know them better. Find out why they are not doing their jobs right. It won't be easy, but if you get close to them you may be able to help. Be understanding and supportive. You will have to make a special effort to set a good example yourself and be a good model in hopes that your colleagues will change their ways and be better workers.

Terry Monoyios
High school foreign language teacher
Grand Rapids, Michigan

■ Encouragement is a small investment that reaps big dividends. As a support provider for beginning teachers, I believe that recognizing what a colleague does well is an important approach. I always let the colleague know that I have no other agenda than supporting him or her as a professional. Whatever we address is between us. I make it clear, as I work with various teachers, that it is my job to work with them and render whatever support is needed. An effective education system depends upon teamwork, and we all need to bear our fair share of the responsibilities. This kind of challenge should be seasoned with encouragement and respect when approaching a co-worker.



Ted Pitts

Todd Taylor
Support provider
Victorville, California

Got an Answer?

How do you get a shy or reluctant student to participate more in class activities?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@list.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Include your name, city, state, and job title. If published, you will receive an *NEA Today* mug!

"Real teachers. . . believe that it's not the IQ in education that is important. It's the I Will."

—Jan Downing, sixth grade special education teacher, Georgetown, Massachusetts

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†Annual fee for the NEA *Platinum Plus* and NEA School Days credit cards: None. The Annual Percentage Rate (APR) for purchases and cash advances is 9.9% for the NEA *Platinum Plus* card and 11.85% for the NEA School Days card: each Indexed Rate APR may vary. The current promotional APR offer for all purchase and cash advance transactions (including balance transfers) made with either account is 0% through your first six statement closing dates effective upon the opening of your account. When your payment is late (*i.e.*, not received by 2 p.m. on its Payment Due Date), or when the promotional offer expires, the Indexed Rate will be applied to all new and outstanding purchase and cash advance balances as of the first day of the next billing cycle and will be calculated using the Variable-Rate Information accompanying your card. Transaction fee for Bank and ATM cash advances; credit card cash advance checks and balance transfers is 2% of each cash advance ($2 minimum, $30 maximum). Transaction fee for the purchase of wire transfers, person-to-person money transfers, money orders, bets, lottery tickets and casino gaming chips is 2% of each such purchase ($2 minimum, $30 maximum). **Transaction fees are waived on transfers requested with your application.** The non-promotional Indexed Rate APR for your account is not guaranteed and is subject to change. **MBNA will allocate your payments to balances (including new transactions) with a 0% APR before balances with higher APRs.** Balance transfers and/or cash advances of any kind may not be used to pay off or pay down any other MBNA account. **REMINDER**: To obtain the benefits of the grace period for new purchases, you must pay your New Balance Total in full and on time.

‡Certain restrictions apply to each benefit as described in the benefits brochures which are sent soon after your account is opened. NEA School Days Card Customer benefits differ from those available with the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, *i.e.*, benefit coverage amounts are lower.

NEA School Days Card credit line runs from $500 to $5,000, while NEA *Platinum Plus* credit line is from $5,500 to $100,000 for eligible applicants.

The NEA is not involved in the credit decision process; standard credit review procedure is followed. All applications will be subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America.

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The information about the costs of the cards described in this application was accurate as of 3/2002. The information may have changed after that date. To find out what may have changed, please call (888) 758-7946. TTY users please call (800) 833-6262.

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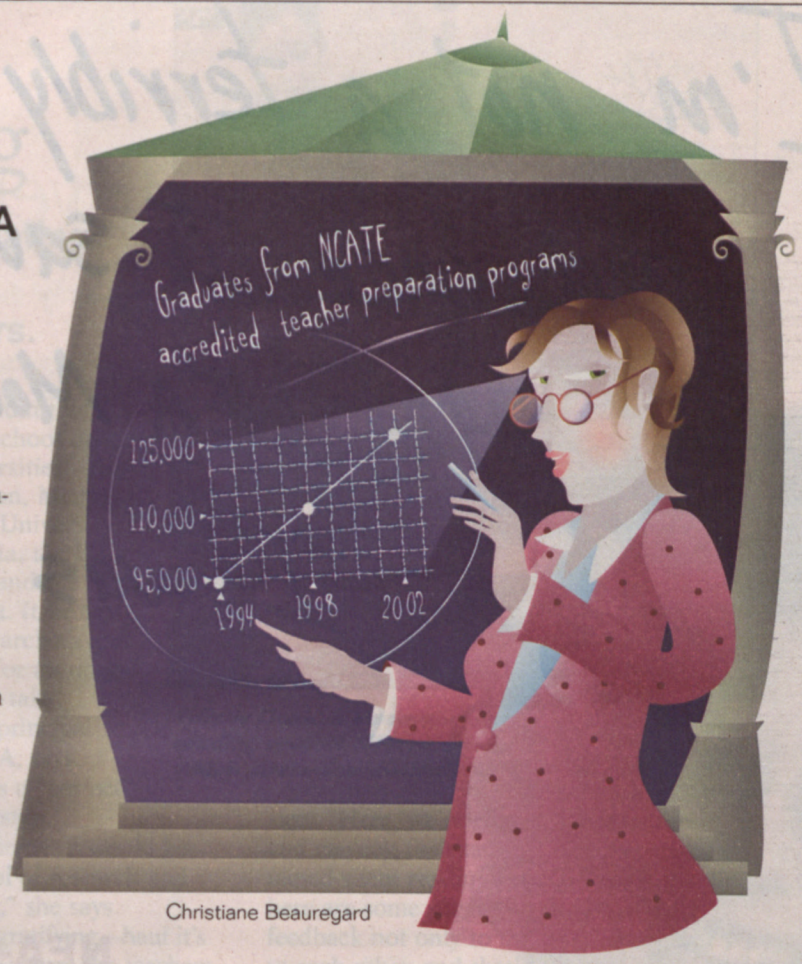
Teacher Quality

From student teachers to veterans, NEA members can do and are doing a lot to improve classroom practice.



Christiane Beauregard

The revised federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act sets new teacher quality benchmarks, but it takes more than government edicts to achieve excellence. Every teacher, no matter how good, wants to do a better job, so NEA and its members have led many initiatives to improve the quality of teaching, long before lawmakers took this on as a cause. Here's an overview of how teachers at all levels of experience are improving the profession.

How can student teachers get the preparation they'll need for that first classroom?

Student teachers need strong academic preparation, intensive study in the science of good teaching, and practical experience before they take full responsibility for a classroomful of children.

To upgrade the quality of teacher preparation, NEA helped create the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in 1954 and continues to play an active role in its work.

Before NCATE grants accreditation to a college or university, a board of examiners pays a visit and evaluates the programs using NCATE's research-based standards. About two-thirds of all graduates of teacher preparation programs now come from NCATE-accredited schools (see chart).

NEA also pioneered the concept of partnerships between universities and "professional development schools"—public schools that work like teaching hospitals. Veteran teachers who work at the school give students the benefit of their practical knowledge. Student teachers, school faculty, and university faculty "go on rounds" together, observing classes and discussing what they see.

NEA has helped create and fund 17 such partnerships since 1995, producing thousands of new teachers well-equipped for the real world.

The NEA Student Program also offers preservice teachers ways to gain valuable experience. The program offers workshops by veteran professionals on such issues as how to deal with unruly students. "We focus on problems that can trip up first-year teachers," says Student Program staffer Malcolm Staples.

How can new teachers become master teachers?

The new teacher's strongest ally is a good mentor, says Gayla Hudson, director of NEA's Teacher Quality division.

"The mentor should be not just an accomplished teacher, but also trained in mentoring," Hudson notes. Mentors and new teachers must also have time set aside for them to work together.

"The number one reason new teachers leave teaching is that they're dissatisfied with the school environment—they feel it's a sink or swim situation," says Hudson. "A mentor can make the difference."

NEA local and state affiliates have actively promoted strong mentor programs through legislation, bargaining, and informal pressure.

How can experienced teachers improve their skills?

The first step is to set your own standards for what quality teaching is, says Hudson. She suggests comparing your work with standards developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (on the Web at www.nbpts.org).

NEA was one of the National Board's founding organizations in 1986. To date, 16,000 teachers nationwide have gained certification in one of 24 fields.

Other effective approaches for improving teaching practice involve groups of teachers at a school working together to examine what they do and experiment with changes.

These site-based activities usually include examining a specific question about instruction and student learning. Teachers say the professional opportunity to work with peers is a big benefit.

School districts need to provide time for these teacher-driven professional development activities, Hudson adds.

What does the revised Elementary and Secondary Education Act say about teacher quality?

The new law defines "highly qualified" teachers as those who are fully certified or licensed and competent in the subjects they teach.

New teachers must pass a state test to demonstrate competence in a subject area or, for secondary school teachers, have the equivalent of an academic major in their subject. Teachers already on the job can prove their competence the same way, or the state can create a non-test evaluation of academic competence for them. National Board Certification is another way to prove competence.

Title I teachers hired as of 2002-03 must meet the requirements. Others have until the end of the 2005-06 year.

So will all teachers really be highly qualified by 2005?

Not likely, says Hudson. It takes more than a law to put a quality teacher in front of a class.

When administrators hire unqualified teachers or assign people to teach out of field, it's not usually because the administrators don't care. In most cases, they simply couldn't hire enough qualified teachers at the salaries and teaching conditions they are offering.

So the success of the new law will depend on the government's willingness to back up edicts with resources.

"Every time an Association wins a pay raise, a class size limit, or a mentoring program, it is helping to improve the quality of teaching by creating conditions that will attract and hold on to good teachers," Hudson says.

"A quality teacher is the most effective agent we have for lifting our children to higher levels of achievement, and that is especially true for children from low-income homes," Hudson adds. "Quality is worth the investment." ✔

—Alain Jehlen

For more:

- **On the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, visit www.nbpts.org.**
- **On the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, visit www.ncate.org.**
- **On the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, call NEA's ESEA hotline, 866/373-ESEA (3732).**
- **On the NEA Student Program, visit www.nea.org/students/.**
- **On mentoring and teacher quality projects in progress now, see pages 16 and 23 of this *NEA Today*.**

I'm not a terribly experienced investor, but once I saw the great rate of the NEA Money Market, I was sold.

— Sue Jeffery, Special Education teacher
NEA Member for 27 years

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*For the NEA-Sponsored FDIC-Insured Money Market Account the minimum amount to open an account and obtain the Annual Percentage Yield (APY) is $500. The current APYs with the bonus are: balances of $500 to $49,999 – 2.77%, balances of $50,000 or more – 3.02%. The APYs are based on a bonus rate of 1% for the first 60 days with a limit of one bonus period per member. The current APYs without the bonus are: balances of $500 to $49,999 – 2.60%, balances of $50,000 or more – 2.86%. **For balances below $500 the bonus is not applicable and the APY is 1.13%.** The APYs are valid from 3/11/02 – 3/17/02. The rates may change after the account is opened. Fees could reduce earnings on the account.

†In weekly surveys published by *The Bank Rate Monitor*, MBNA has consistently ranked among the top 1% of more than 8,000 banks nationwide.

ΔEligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children. The NEA-Sponsored FDIC-Insured Money Market Program has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew membership, that person and his/her family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates through the NEA-Sponsored FDIC-Insured Money Market Program. If eligible, a replacement account will be offered.

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Winning at Reading

A North Carolina elementary school is beating the odds, thanks to a special partnership between teachers and reading researchers.

North Elementary School in Roxboro, North Carolina, isn't the kind of place that would normally catch the eye of a prestigious group of reading researchers, not to mention educators from five major universities.

"We're one of those overlooked rural places outside of Durham," says fourth grade teacher Blondenia Clayton. "Most of our children get free or reduced lunch, and many come from single-parent homes."

But that doesn't mean spirited work isn't being done, she says. "We have a tremendous desire to help every child learn to read—and a willingness to do just about anything to reach our goal."

And that's precisely why the school was selected for the CIERA Project, a reading achievement project sponsored by the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement. The project consists of a consortium that includes educators, school districts, and five universities—the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, the University of Southern California, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Georgia. It brings together reading researchers and elementary teachers for an ongoing, real life give-and-take.

Barbara Taylor, a principal investigator for CIERA, says North Elementary was a "perfect" choice for the partnership.

"We knew the entire staff would be ready for the long haul of research and classroom application," she says.

And a long—and gratifying—haul it's been. For the past three years the teachers have attended weekly seminars to talk about the reading strategies they use and learn about strategies others have tried.

"As researchers, we observe and add our comments and resources," says Taylor, "but it's the teacher colleague who provides the insight and experience."

The benefits have been endless, says kindergarten teacher Tiffany Dean. "I've had access to the best approaches to teaching reading, and I knew they were backed by research," she says. She's also been able to share books and ideas and "talk about what works and what doesn't."

Clayton says it's been a true collaboration. "Too often teachers are just told what to do," she says. "Here, we're part of the equation and can say, for example, that the sustained silent reading has been great, but here are some suggestions. We provide feedback not only to the researchers, but to each other, and that's key."

Has the partnership made a difference? These days, test scores are up, and North Elementary was recently recognized for best achievement in the district.

The real proof for Blondenia Clayton, however, lies in her classroom. "One day, a child rushed into my classroom and instead of engaging a classmate in small talk, he went straight to his reading buddy to find out what they were reading next.

"He then went to each one of his classmates to check out what they were reading," she says. "That's the best test result of all." ✓

—Anita Merina

Photos by Chris Seward

Tiffany Dean, a kindergarten teacher, says the reading project offered a chance to talk about which strategies worked and which didn't.

Blondenia Clayton says her fourth grade students seem excited about reading since the CIERA project began.

Read Across America All Year Long

NEA's Read Across America is more than a celebration of reading on Dr. Seuss' birthday, it's a project designed to help you promote literacy year-round. How? Log on to www.nea.org/readacross. You'll find a literacy calendar full of activities and celebrations such as Dia de Los Libros (April 28), National Poetry Month (April), Teen Read Week in September, and this month, ASPCA's Kids, Animals, and Literacy month. Visit the site often for listings and resources plus highlights from this year's Read Across America event.

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HOW TO... WORK WITH READING RESEARCH

"When researchers and teachers work collaboratively, it's the best of all possible worlds," says University of Minnesota researcher Barbara Taylor, CIERA reading expert and one of the authors of *Teaching Every Child to Read: Frequently Asked Questions*. This reading package has fresh answers to 10 of the most pressing questions about teaching reading. *Teaching Every Child to Read* also offers a professional development guide.

As a teacher, how can you work best with researchers and the research? Here are a few suggestions.

Don't be intimidated. Researchers need your knowledge and skills, too. Researchers know what works best in a classroom, but how about in your classroom? Work together to plan the right strategies and evaluations. Share your experiences and your concerns as well as your successes.

Make the reading research part of your own professional development. Ongoing professional learning is key to an effective early literacy program. A supportive school and school district should recognize the benefits of regular skill-building sessions

Don't miss the opportunity to offer feedback on the home and community connection. Parents, school, and community leaders can also learn from the researcher's expertise and your experience.

Read the research not only from your school but from others in the project or schools similar to yours. Talk to the researchers about the differences between your project and others and strategies that worked elsewhere. Find out how to create a literacy-rich environment.

Above all, learn from the experience. Listen to your reading expert but trust your knowledge as well.

For more information about CIERA and to order *Teaching Every Child to Read* and other resources, go to www.ciera.org. To contact reading expert Barbara Taylor, E-mail her at bmtaylor@umn.edu.

TEAMWORK

Keeping Their Eyes on the Road

Georgia bus drivers rally for safety standards.

Almost 250 school bus drivers from across the state of Georgia rallied in February at the capitol building in Atlanta to raise awareness about school bus safety.

The rally centered on new legislation designed to empower drivers to deal with safety issues. The legislation, proposed by the Georgia Association of Educators/NEA, addresses student violence against drivers, student behavior standards, and provides protection to drivers who speak out about safety issues.

"We wanted the drivers in the state of Georgia to know that this is the first real safety legislation put out there," says Jill Travis, an 11-year driver and chairperson of the state ESP committee. "We saw there was a problem and wanted to go to our state elected officials to make a change and get laws on the books."

Gary Meek

Jill Travis says school administrators do not listen to drivers' safety concerns.

Much of the concern for driver safety stems from a November incident in which a student brutally assaulted a school bus driver. The student had a history of violence, but the driver was not aware of the student's past behavior.

After hearing the driver's story, Lieutenant Governor Mark Taylor offered his support to the bus drivers' cause. He introduced GAE's proposal in the state Senate in January.

Liz Rackley

UniServ Director Mark Perez addresses Georgia bus drivers at February's rally.

The bill, which still was in committee at press time, modifies an existing law that addresses student violence against teachers. The revision adds school support professionals and expands the scope of the legislation.

The existing law addresses only acts of violence that result in "substantial physical injury," a judgment call that has been left to the discretion of school administrators, says UniServ Director Mark Perez. The GAE proposal clearly defines physical violence. It also increases the penalties students face for committing or threatening violence against any school employee, regardless of the level or lack of injury sustained.

Students who engage in such behavior could be suspended, expelled, and/or transferred to an alternative education program. (Georgia bus drivers also are lobbying for better pay, better benefits, and better equipment. For more, see "We All Face the Same Issues!" *NEA Today,* January.)

Georgia's drivers want access to student behavior histories, the right to remove chronically disruptive students from their buses, and monitors on buses that experience recurring discipline problems, says Travis.

"A constantly disruptive child keeps the driver from concentrating on what she needs to concentrate on, which is safely driving," Travis says. "Our eyes should be on the road, not worrying about what's going on in the back of the bus."

Glenda Grimmett, president of the Pickens [County] Organization of School Support Employees, agrees. The

Going the Extra Mile

Paraeducators Win NEA Foundation Grants

Three paraeducators are among the latest recipients of learning and leadership grants from the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education. **Julie Tucker**, a paraeducator in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and her colleagues of the local Specialists in Education Association (SIEA) received a $3,000 group grant to develop a conflict resolution workshop targeted to paraeducators. The workshop, which can include up to 180 participants, will take place in fall 2002 and draw presenters from the Colorado School Mediation Project. The local will provide ongoing professional development opportunities through SIEA meetings and district training sessions, and will conduct a follow-up survey to evaluate the training.

Esther Anderson and three other paraeducators in Iowa also received a $3,000 grant. The paras will attend two courses at Northeast Iowa Community College to learn how to assist students with their social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and behavioral development; how to use technology to support student learning; and how to implement ethical and professional standards of conduct as paraeducators. They will share what they learn with teachers and education support professionals during monthly training sessions.

Lynne McCreary, a teaching assistant in Pennsylvania, will work with speech and language therapists, classroom teachers, and district administrators to explore best practices in literacy instruction for autistic students. Their yearlong program will include site visits, training sessions with experts from Johns Hopkins University and the University of Southern Mississippi,

TEAM PLAYER

Cooking It Up At Camp

Name: **Rosemarie Wood**
Job Title: Manager/Head Cook, Sedgwick Elementary School, Sedgwick, Maine

What I Do In My Job: I do it all, everything, because we're a small school. I do the paper work, the menu planning, and the cooking.

The Most Rewarding Part of My Job: The kids, working with the kids. We try to do fun things with them and that's why I stay.

My Favorite Pastime: In the winter time I like to snowmobile. In the summer I like the water and going on picnics at our local island. I do a lot of arts and crafts. I'm taking a stained glass class and I knit. I also enjoy spending time with my son and daughter.

How I've Helped My Association: I'm the treasurer of our Association, and I've been a negotiator for the last 10 years.

My Community Involvement Includes: The DARE program is one of my babies. We volunteer a lot and try to raise money. We've put on a basketball tournament for the grammar school kids. We've done dances for the graduates of the program and stuff like that. We'll hold a big graduation party where the kids can go swimming, have pizza, and play games.

In June, after school gets out, we have an overnight camp for the kids who have gone through the program. We have between 150 and 180 kids for a week.

I love it. I've done that for eight or nine years now. I'm a counselor, so I usually have between 8 and 12 girls that are mine for the week, and we do camp things. We swim, play sports, have dances, karaoke, and canoe.

I'm kind of like a jack of all trades. I have my hands in a lot of things. ✔

Michael York

February rally was the first event Grimmett, and members of the newly formed local, had attended.

"We're going to get to the point that bus drivers have to be informed if there are behavior problems," Grimmett says. "A child with serious behavior problems should not be put on a regular bus where a driver is trying to drive, monitor the children, and have a safe trip to and from school."

School and district administrators do not listen to drivers' safety concerns, Travis says. They ignore minor offenses, do not support drivers who report students for breaking bus rules, or they transfer drivers to different routes if they complain, she adds. The lack of support undermines the authority drivers have over their students, which perpetuates the discipline problems. Travis hopes February's rally draws attention to these issues.

"We wanted the legislators to know that our Board of Education and the superintendents say we don't have problems on the school bus," Travis says. "And when we do have problems, they don't back the drivers. What kind of message does that send to the good students, and why should they constantly have their safety put in jeopardy because you have one student who refuses to follow directions?

"It's the safety of the good students that nobody wants to pay attention to." ✔

—Kristen Loschert

and attendance at a national conference on autism at Pennsylvania State University. The group received a $3,000 group grant to fund the project.

For more information about NEA Foundation Grants visit www.nfie.org.

Tahlequah ESP Wins Technology Grant

The ESP local in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, is the latest to receive an NEA ESP Technology Grant. The local will use the $2,895 grant to purchase a laptop computer, digital camera, printer, and carrying cases.

Members **Lavonne Hastings** and **Sheila Clay** drafted the group's grant proposal. The local will use the new equipment to create a communication network among its members and increase publicity with a member newsletter and newspaper submissions to recognize members' accomplishments.

For more information about the ESP Technology Grants visit www.nea.org/esp/espnea/techgrnt.htm.

RESOURCES

Now on the Web

The NEA publications *Food Services ESP—Building a Quality Workforce* and *Clerical Services ESP—Building a Quality Workforce* are now available on the ESP Web site at www.nea.org/esp/resource/esppubl.htm.

The 16-page food services booklet includes information on privatization, health and safety, and training, as well as an extensive resource list. This is the third booklet in the *Quality Workforce* series to go online. The 19-page booklet for clerical services ESP includes sections on technology, office politics, and professional development.

Both publications can be read or downloaded from the Web site. They also are available in print form. For print copies E-mail ESP.Program@nea.org.

School Bus Safety

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation has a Web site dedicated to school bus safety. The site includes links to the federal motor vehicle safety standards, school bus traffic safety facts, and the traffic safety materials catalog.

The site also links to the School Bus Drivers In-Service Safety Series, a training program for pupil transportation managers. The training program addresses seven topics including driver attitude, student management, loading and unloading, and transporting infants and toddlers. You can find the site at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/buses/index.html.

NEA Members Insurance Trust Plan®

2000 Summary Annual Report

(Trust Plan Year Beginning September 1, 2000)

The following is the summary annual report for the NEA Members Insurance Trust Plan (Trust), Employer Identification Number 52-1126682, including information for NEA Life Insurance Program, NEA Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance Program, NEA DUES-TAB®, and NEA MemberCare® Medicare Supplement Program for the period beginning September 1, 2000, and ending August 31, 2001. The annual report has been filed with the Internal Revenue Service, as required under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

BASIC NEA MEMBERS INSURANCE TRUST FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The value of Trust assets, after subtracting liabilities of the Trust was **$82,864,103** as of August 31, 2001, compared to **$118,843,875** as of September 1, 2000. During the Trust year, the Trust experienced a decrease in its net assets of **$35,979,772**. This decrease includes unrealized appreciation and depreciation in the value of Trust assets; that is, the difference between the value of the Trust assets at the end of the year and the value of the assets at the beginning of the year or the cost of assets acquired during the year. During the Trust year, the Trust had total income of **$33,942,440** including participant contributions of **$56,972,589**, realized losses of **$651,064** from the sale of assets, and earnings from investments of **$5,745,163**.

Trust expenses were **$69,922,212**. These expenses included benefits paid to participants and beneficiaries, and administrative and other expenses.

INFORMATION FOR NEA LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAM

The Trust has a contract with The Prudential Insurance Company of America to pay all Life Insurance claims incurred under the terms of this program. The total contributions for the Trust plan year beginning September 1, 2000, and ending August 31, 2001, were **$36,303,087**.

Because it is a so called "experienced rated" contract, the premium costs are affected by, among other things, the number and size of claims. Of the total contributions made for the Trust year ending August 31, 2001, the contributions made under such "experienced-rated" contract were **$36,303,087,** and the total of all benefit claims paid under the contract during the Trust year was **$31,231,768**.

INFORMATION FOR NEA ACCIDENTAL DEATH AND DISMEMBERMENT (AD&D) PROGRAM

The Trust has a contract with The Prudential Insurance Company of America to pay all AD&D claims incurred under the terms of the Trust. The total contributions for the Trust year beginning September 1, 2000, and ending August 31, 2001 were **$2,147,545**.

Because it is a so-called "experienced rated" contract, the premium costs are affected by, among other things, the number and size of claims. Of the total contributions made for the Trust year ending August 31, 2001, the contributions made under such "experienced-rated" contract were **$2,147,545,** and the total of all benefit claims paid under the contract during the Trust year was **$1,555,449**.

INFORMATION FOR NEA DUES-TAB PROGRAM

The Trust has a contract with The Prudential Insurance Company of America to pay all NEA DUES-TAB claims incurred under the terms of the Trust. The total contributions for the Trust year beginning September 1, 2000, and ending August 31, 2001, were **$2,053,361**.

Of the total contributions made for the Trust year ending August 31, 2001, the contributions made were **$2,053,361,** and the total of all benefit claims paid under the contract during the Trust year was **$1,730,455**. Benefits charged, less benefit claims paid, were **$72,980,** which is comprised of incurred but unreported claims and a pooled claim charge. Trust expenses, less benefit claims paid, were **$48,075** in premium taxes and **$153,851** in other expenses.

The NEA DUES-TAB program is self-supporting and paid by premiums from the NEA Members Insurance Trust funds rather than from Member contributions.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

As a participant, you have the right to receive a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof for a reasonable charge, or you may inspect the Annual Report without charge at the office of NEA Members Insurance Trust, c/o NEA Member Benefits, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 or at the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C. You also have the right to receive from the Trust Administrator, on request and at no charge, a statement of the assets and liabilities of the Trust and accompanying notes, or a statement of income and expenses of the Trust and accompanying notes, or both. The Administrator will state the charge, if any, of the specific document you request so you can find out the cost before ordering.

You'll Flip Over Backflip.com

I have discovered the best Web site! It is backflip.com, a free Internet bookmark manager. You can post all of your favorite sites in your own directory by creating folders and adding Web sites.

After my school established its network, I wanted to share my favorite educational Web sites with the students, but I didn't have time to add bookmarks to every computer in the school. Since backflip.com is Web based, I can create a folder for my hot list and have students access it as their home page.

Backflip has increased our Internet security as well because students access only the Web sites that teachers select and place on the site. You can see my site at www.backflip.com/members/breicher.

Bruce Reicher
Technology teacher
Wyckoff, New Jersey

Backflip.com lets teachers create personal directories of their favorite Web sites that can be easily shared with students.

Online Photo Gallery

Three years ago I created a Web site for my school, www.preschoolfun.com. The Web site provides secure picture galleries that feature images of our students participating in their daily activities. Parents and relatives visit the password-protected galleries to see the fun new things their children complete during the day.

Small digital cameras make it easy to photograph your students. Teachers E-mail the pictures to me and I post them to their galleries.

Many of our students have developmental delays. When parents and students visit the picture galleries together the pictures encourage students to communicate with their parents and describe what they did during the day. The picture galleries also provide a great resource for our Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings.

The site's Virtual Link Library helps parents and educators learn more about various disabilities students might have.

Carl Treutle
Preschool special day class teacher
Vista, California

Teachers' Pets

My job as the technology coordinator of a small elementary school requires that I show teachers how to use the technology available to them.

In looking for inspiration, I decided to add a section about teachers' pets to our school's Web site. To participate, teachers must learn how to use one of our three digital cameras, take the camera home, photograph their pets, and E-mail an attachment of the digital images to me at school.

This task encompasses several necessary technology skills and creates a motivating display for teachers, parents, and students. You can see our pets at www.mersd.org/memorial.

Paul B. Clark
Technology coordinator
Manchester, Massachusetts

Web-based Exam Review

I have a favorite classroom final exam tip. I put a copy of my study guide, final exam, and a Real Audio file of my lecture on my teacher Web site located at www.windyhillmiddle.org/wardc.html. This allows students to review for the final exam on their own if they are sick or out of town the week before exams.

Chris Ward
Seventh grade keyboarding and computer teacher
Clermont, Florida

PowerPoint® Presentations

Microsoft® PowerPoint® is a great advance in classroom technology. It is extremely easy to use to produce great looking and great sounding presentations. I have used PowerPoint for many different level math classes. I also have been able to download some good presentations from different Web sites. You can view some of my math presentations on www.kidsdomain.com.

Don Fisher
High school math teacher
Madera, California

My favorite Web site

My favorite site is my own. I have created a tool for my class known as the Green Team Science Site. We know that communication between home and school plays a vital role in the success of a student. It seems appropriate to use technology to assist that communication. The site offers class policies, a calendar, homework, helpful sites, copies of handouts and notes, as well as room to show off some of the students' hard work. Check out www.sad57.k12.me.us/~dchuhta.

Daniel Chuhta
Eighth grade science teacher
Portland, Maine

TALK TO US

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words, please!) to wiredclassroom@list.nea.org.

Is there a Web site, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to myfavoritetech@list.nea.org.

Got a technology question? Ask our Web editor at webeditor@list.nea.org.

Or send your responses by regular mail to *NEA Today*, by fax to 202/822-7206 or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

Those published here will receive a sparkling *NEA Today* mug!

Bytes for Beginners

Can you tell me which Internet search engine is the best and why?

The two primary types of search engines are "crawler-based" engines and "human-powered" ones. Crawler-based engines create databases of Web site content automatically. Individual search companies, like Google™, program their software to "crawl" the Web endlessly and peek at millions of Web pages. The engines look at page titles, body text, links, and other elements that make up a Web site.

Human-powered directories depend on Web page developers, subject area experts, and other users to recommend sites and submit short descriptions that are compiled into a single directory. A search of this directory yields content from only those submitted entries.

Crawler-based engines generally set the pace for innovations in search technology, so let's focus on them. In addition to the crawler software, a good search engine maintains a giant book (called an index) that organizes the sites the software locates. The index continually updates with new information.

Crawler-based engines have additional programs that reference the index and pull content to match a search query. A search engine's particular design and structure determine how it interprets and executes that query.

Some search engines rank the importance of a keyword based on where it appears in a Web page. The engine narrows the search further based on the number of times the keyword appears on the same page. For example, let's say you're searching for "apple." Engine A finds that "apple" is referenced in 10,000 Web pages of its index. What's more, it sees that "apple" appears in the titles of 5,000 of those 10,000 pages.

Engine A narrows the 5,000 pages down to 1,000 by counting how many times "apple" appears on each of those 1,000 pages. A user receives a results page with those 1,000 pages listed at the top.

You can learn more about search engines by visiting http://searchenginewatch.com/. The site includes links to popular search sites and tips for finding information on the Web. *Got a question? E-mail* **webeditor@list.nea.org**.

Helping Children with Sickle Cell Disease

More than 70,000 Americans live with sickle cell disease—and not without difficulty. The anemia and pain associated with this blood disorder can be tough to bear, but it can really take a toll on small children and young adolescents trying to be "normal" in school. To get a handle on the disease and what teachers can do to comfort students who have it, Paul Sathrum of the NEA Health Information Network talked to Dr. Michael R. DeBaun, assistant professor of Pediatrics and Biostatistics at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri.

What is sickle cell disease?

Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disorder that causes anemia, pain and problems throughout the body. People with sickle cell disease have red blood cells that assume abnormal, crescent shapes. These sickled cells are hard and less flexible than normal cells, so they have a difficult time passing through small blood vessels.

Normal blood flow through the body gets disrupted, and every major organ of the body is at risk for damage. The most common form of sickle disease is sickle cell anemia. Other types include sickle C disease and sickle beta thalasemmia.

How does one get sickle cell disease?

Everyone has two copies of a gene that tells the body to make hemoglobin, a protein contained in the red blood cells. A child inherits one gene from each parent. The gene for normal hemoglobin is often designated as hemoglobin A. When sickle cell disease is present, hemoglobin A doesn't get produced properly and that causes the formation of an abnormal gene, called hemoglobin S. A person with sickle cell disease has two of these abnormal hemoglobin genes.

A child who inherits one normal and one abnormal hemoglobin gene has what's called the sickle cell trait. This is different from the disease—there are no symptoms. Yet if a child is born to parents who carry the sickle cell trait, that child has a 1 in 4 chance of having the disease.

How many people are impacted by sickle cell, and who's mostly affected?

Worldwide, sickle cell primarily affects individuals of sub-Saharan African descent. Less frequently, it is found among people from Spanish-speaking regions, East India, and the part of the Mediterranean basin that includes Sicily, Greece, and Italy.

In the United States, about 70,000 people live with the sickle cell disease—and the vast majority of those are African-Americans. One in every 400 African-American newborns has sickle cell disease, and one in every 10 African-Americans has the sickle cell trait.

Barbara Friedman

How are children with sickle cell identified?

In almost every state in this country, newborn infants are screened for sickle cell disease using blood tests. If the screening identifies sickle cell disease, a second test is done to confirm the diagnosis. This early diagnosis of sickle cell disease is very important for providing the necessary treatment of and parental education about the disease.

What are the complications of sickle cell disease?

Pain is the most common complication. It results when the blood that flows through the small blood vessels is blocked. This obstruction is sudden and can occur at anytime. It may last from one to seven days and can vary in intensity and frequency.

Many who experience this pain say it is sharp and shooting, like a truck had hit them, but it can also be dull or throbbing. It is most often experienced in the arms and legs in older children and in the hands and feet of infants. A pain episode is the most common complication a child may experience at school, but school staff may notice the child becoming easily tired or needing to urinate or drink water more frequently than other students.

What about stroke?

Stroke, which occurs when blood flow to the brain is blocked, is also a common and devastating complication. Strokes occur most commonly in children under 10. Approximately 9 percent of school-age children with sickle cell disease will have what's called an overt stroke before completing high school. Overt strokes manifest in some kind of physical impairment. However, the more common brain injury is silent stroke, which affects 22 percent of children with the disease.

Silent strokes don't cause outward signs of physical deficits. They manifest almost solely in poor school performance. Our research indicates about 60 percent of students with silent strokes either repeat a grade or require special educational help. Students with sickle cell disease who demonstrate significant changes in their academic performance should be evaluated by a pediatric hematologist for the possibility of silent stroke.

Is there a treatment for sickle cell disease?

The only cure for sickle cell disease is a bone marrow transplant. Other treatments focus on lessening the intensity or frequency of the symptoms and the progression of the disease. ✔

School employees can do a lot to support children and adolescents with sickle cell disease. Some tips are:

- Establish an action plan if the patient becomes ill at school. Call parents immediately if the student complains of significant pain.
- Help students who are ill for a prolonged period by sending class assignments home or, in special situations, suggesting homebound education for a specific period.
- Be aware of major changes in academic performance or behavior. A decline in performance may signal that the student has had an unrecognized stroke.
- Encourage participation in class activities. The student may tire more quickly than other classmates, so allow opportuniies for breaks and rest; don't exclude.
- Allow frequent trips to the restroom and drinking fountain when the student asks.
- Avoid labeling. Encourage students to share their experiences with the disease only if it's comfortable for them.

WHERE TO GET HELP

- Sickle Cell Disease Association of America. Call 800/421-8453 or visit www.sicklecelldisease.org.
- The Sickle Cell Information Center: www.emory.edu/PEDS/SICKLE.
- The Sickle Cell Disease Program, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. Visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov.

Getting a Grip on Diabetes

It's known as the "silent killer"—and for good reason. Diabetes, an incurable, chronic illness, affects some 16 million Americans. But 5.4 million aren't even aware they have it. New Jersey school social worker Norma Osman is one of the lucky ones. Not only was she diagnosed early, she took a proactive approach to managing her disease and is doing just fine, thank you.

Ten years ago Norma Osman considered herself pretty healthy: Though she had high blood pressure, she wasn't overweight and she regularly played tennis and swam. Osman ate well, too, but admits to giving in now and again to pizza and her hands-down favorite—chocolate.

Then one day, concerned about her blood pressure, Osman paid her doctor a visit. When after several tests he delivered the news—that she had Type 2 diabetes, the most common form of the disease—she was stunned. With Type 2, also called adult onset diabetes, the body doesn't produce or properly use insulin, a pancreatic hormone needed to metabolize sugar, starches, and other food into energy. Osman would have to completely change the way she managed her health, her doctor said. And it would have to be forever.

Tom Spader

NEA member Norma Osman, a social worker in the Jamesburg School District in Jamesburg, New Jersey, is successfully managing diabetes.

Already juggling a host of duties in the Jamesburg School District in Jamesburg, New Jersey, as well as in her private practice, Osman got in gear. She learned more about the disease, saw a nutritionist, and has spent the decade since doing the smart stuff needed to keep her condition from worsening.

It hasn't been easy. Everyday Osman must take a diabetic medication and twice daily must check her glucose levels to make sure they're not too high or low. With the prick of her finger and use of a blood meter, she helps guard against complications such as blindness, kidney disease, stroke, and loss of limbs due to nerve damage.

Osman also takes pains not to skip meals, too. "If I have to attend a meeting," she says, "I balance off a late lunch with a mid-morning snack." Of course, what she eats is critical. Type 2 diabetes not only has been linked to obesity, stress, and sedentary lifestyles, but according to a recent Harvard University study, the condition has also been linked to diets heavy in processed meats such as hot dogs, bacon, and cold cuts. Experts say with steadily rising levels of obesity in this country, it's no wonder the disease is near epidemic proportion.

So Osman sticks to meals that are low in fat, salt, and sugar, and she's boosted her exercise routine by walking or swimming five times a week. "I sometimes take walks from one end of the building to the other," she notes. "Our school is such a large building that even walking to the restroom is good exercise. Summertime is my favorite: I swim more, sweat more, and eat less."

Osman admits it might all seem a bit much, but she says it's what the disease demands. "Your doctor can only tell you what you need to do," she warns, "but you have to take control. You can't go on vacation and forget about it for a few days."

For more information, visit the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org or call 800/DIABETES (800/342-2383). ✔

—Jennie Young
NEA Health Information Network

Quick Tip

If you're feeling tired or headachy all the time, you may have diabetes and not know it.

What to do? First, find out whether you have a genetic predisposition to the disease. Norma Osman's grandfather and father had it. "But I never considered I could be at risk," she says. So like many people she ignored the warning signs. In her case she was always thirsty.

But other people may experience trembling, dizziness, headaches, or fatigue. Or they may have blurred vision, extreme hunger, irritability, or unusual weight loss.

Some groups have a higher risk for diabetes: African-Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, and Native Americans. But if you're eating sugary, high-fat food, are constantly stressed out, and are not exercising, you could be at risk regardless of your ethnic group.

So see your doctor if you're experiencing any of these symptoms—or if you're overweight and generally not feeling well.

Meanwhile, pile on the veggies, put down the candy bars, and get moving!

NEA-HIN

From the **NEA Health Information Network**

■ WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

May 31 is World No Tobacco Day (WNTD). The annual observance is designed to draw attention to the impact tobacco use has on public health. Want to organize WNTD activities? Download the turnkey kit at www.wntd.com.

■ FREE FOOD ALLERGY PROGRAM

The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network has a limited number of free School Food Allergy Programs available. This multimedia program, used by many schools to successfully manage food allergies, includes a video, EpiPen® trainer, poster, and binder packed with goodies. Visit www.foodallergy.org or write to FAAN, 10400 Eaton Place, Suite #107, Fairfax, Virginia 22030.

■ IAQ TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS ROAD MAP

The Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Tools for Schools Road Map is available from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This 8.5 x 17 inch four-color poster outlines 10 steps for developing a comprehensive IAQ program using the IAQ Tools for Schools Kit. To get a copy, call the IAQ INFO Clearinghouse at 800/438-4318.

■ CENTRAL HOTLINE FOR U.S. POISON CONTROL CENTERS

A single toll-free telephone number is now available to reach a poison control center anywhere in the U.S. Call 800/222-1222 and be automatically linked to the one closest to you.

■ PARENTING HANDBOOK

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development has a new booklet using three decades of research on effective parenting. Order Adventures in Parenting: How Responding, Preventing, Monitoring, Mentoring, and Modeling Can Help You Be a Successful Parent by calling 800/370-2943 or visiting www.nichd.nih.gov.

Cleaning Up on the Court

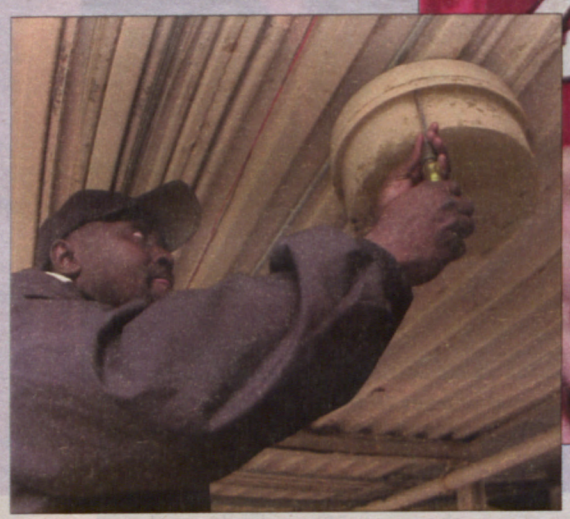
Willie Davis still remembers how his own basketball coaches influenced his life. In fact, they are the reasons Davis became the coach he is today. Under Davis' guidance, the boys' basketball team at Arthur F. Smith Junior High School in Alexandria, Louisiana, has earned three district championship titles and maintained a 91-14 record the past four years. Davis's efforts are not going unnoticed.

In February, HBO profiled Davis for an episode of *Real Sports* and he appeared in *Sports Illustrated* last year. The experiences still are overwhelming for Davis, who also works as the school's custodian.

"When I got the phone call from *Sports Illustrated*, I was stunned," Davis says. "Then when HBO came with all the cameras, it was a great feeling."

Davis played basketball until ninth grade, but he dropped out of school after his father died. He later coached a youth league for 19 years before coming to the junior high. In 1997, the school asked Davis to coach the team.

"Losing my dad at an early age motivated me to help kids," Davis says. ✔



Photos by Julie Bennett

Chris Cristo

Cribs for Kids

Putting an infant to bed in a crib provides a lot more than just a good night's sleep. It could save a child's life.

That is the philosophy behind Cribs for Kids, a program member **William S. Coleman III** started to provide free cribs to needy mothers in Worcester, Massachusetts. Worcester has one of the highest infant mortality rates in Massachusetts, about 8.4 deaths per 1,000 live births or about 20 deaths per year. Many of those deaths are accidents that occur when items fall on a child who sleeps in a box, on the floor, or in some other unsafe location, Coleman says.

Last February Coleman, a nutrition educator at the University of Massachusetts Extension, partnered with 25 social services and health care agencies to collect 14 cribs and mattresses in 14 days. They received $12,000 in donations before the end of the month. By November, Coleman personally had delivered 175 cribs to needy mothers in the area.

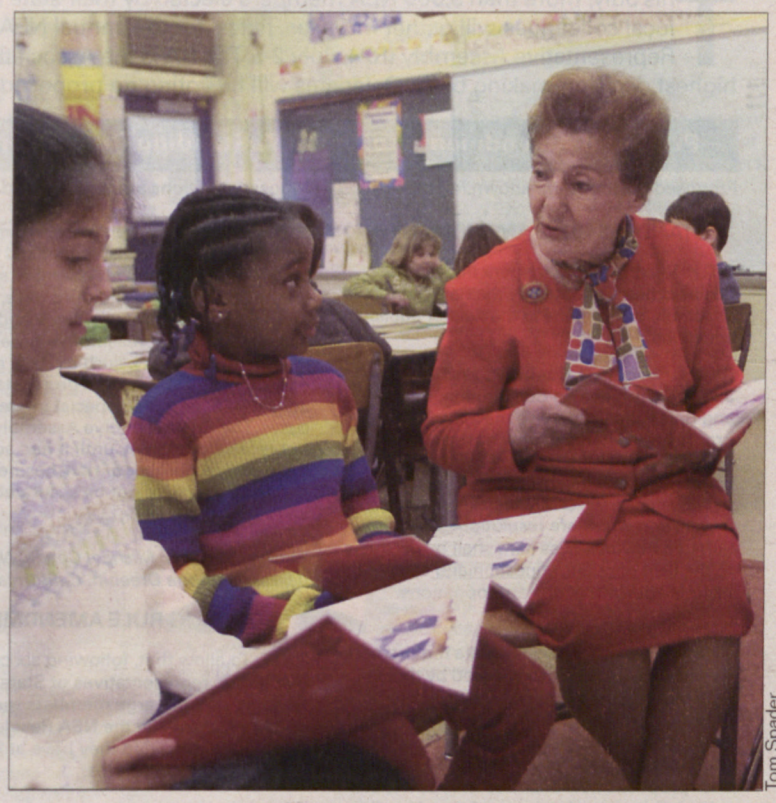
"The question of infant mortality and trying to reduce it is one we have to look at," Coleman says. "Our theory was that the safest place for a baby is a crib."

Coleman kicked off this year's campaign in March with an education program that encourages expectant mothers to seek prenatal care. Coleman and his partner agencies will continue to collect and distribute cribs as needed.

"These are our future students," Coleman says. "So one infant death is one too many."

For more information, call 508/494-0046. ✔

A Late Bloomer



Tom Spader

Celia Folkman Amster retires next month after 33 years in the classroom. Not an unusual story—unless you consider that she didn't begin teaching until age 52.

"I've really enjoyed every single day of teaching," says Amster, 85. "I've always had a good relationship with students and their parents." She's currently teaching a student whose father and uncle she also taught. "After a while, you become part of the family," she says. "I feel like his grandmother!"

Amster, who teaches second grade at Lyncrest School in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, was New Jersey's first Teacher of the Year. She put the $1,000 award to work in the school's backyard. An eight-acre lot across from the school had become an eyesore, strewn with old bicycle parts and tires. Amster mobilized parents who helped convert the lot to a wildlife center, featuring paths and a bridge over a stream.

In the past 30 years, she's become convinced that kids of all eras are more alike than different. "There were troubled kids 30 years ago, and there are troubled kids now." With the prevalence of the media, students' problems are more open, she says.

Amster keeps very active and plans to do so in retirement as well. Her colleagues who already have retired have convinced her she will have plenty to do. "Most of my friends have said that they didn't know how they ever had the time to work," she says. ✔

Deniege Barcia

Agents of Hope

After the September 11 terrorist attacks, **Larry Pryce** and his English students at Pinconning Area High School in rural Michigan created Project B.E.A.R. (Bringing Empathy and Relief). In three months, this extraordinary effort delivered more than 1,200 new stuffed animals to New York and Washington D.C.-area firefighters, police officers, hospital workers, students, and families affected by the attacks.

"Stuffed animals and letters can't change what happened," says Pryce, a 32-year veteran, "but it did give encouragement to families in need."

The students have since collected more than 1,000 additional stuffed animals for 10 local charities.

"This is the greatest community service effort of my career," says Pryce. "We transformed ourselves from a small town school to an agent of hope and caring." ✔

In a League of His Own

Coaching a team that makes it to one or two state championships in a sport is a significant accomplishment. But winning 54 state titles in five different sports over two decades is a completely different ball game—literally.

This amazing number of state championships belongs to **Dave Houle** and his dedicated, enthusiastic players. Houle, from Mountain View High School in Utah, reached his 1,000-win mark in February and won his 54th state championship in girls basketball shortly afterward.

"Every one of my wins is special, it doesn't matter if it's the first or the thousandth," Houle says.

As he reflects on his 20 years as a coach for girls basketball, boys and girls cross country, and boys and girls track, Houle wouldn't say he's burned out. But he does admit he is close to moving to the next level, perhaps to a Division I coaching position.

For now, though, Houle is coaching track and thriving on the energy he gets from his students. ✔

Steve Wilson

The 2002 NEA Representative Assembly

This July, more than 9,000 NEA members elected by their state and local colleagues will gather in Dallas, Texas, for the annual NEA Representative Assembly (RA), July 2-5. The RA is the Association's highest decision-making body. Delegates will be voting on proposed amendments listed below, as well as electing officers and two members of the Executive Committee. You can follow the RA action by going online to www.nea.org. The Web site will list complete, day-to-day coverage of RA debates and action, plus audio and text versions of major RA addresses.

Proposed Amendments to The NEA Standing Rules, Constitution, and Bylaws for vote by the 2002 Representative Assembly

Proposed deletions are shown in brackets ([ ]); proposed additions are underscored.

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 1

TITLE: To add the requirement that all new business items adopted by the Representative Assembly be germane to the field of public education.

Rule 6. Order of Business and Debate
J. The Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules shall supervise the submission and processing of items of new business and amendments to the Legislative Program. The committee shall determine which are items of new business, which are legislative amendments, and which are resolutions. The adoption of a new business item shall be germane to the field of public education and shall not include approval of any appropriations.

IMPACT STATEMENT
This amendment would add a requirement that new business items adopted by the Representative Assembly be germane to public education. It would be the responsibility of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules Committee to determine the germaneness of each proposed new business item as it is submitted. Criteria and a process for making this determination would need to be developed.

Contact Person: Michael Hastings, Illinois

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 2

TITLE: To increase to at least 90 minutes the amount of time that the Representative Assembly is required to spend considering new business at each business session.

Rule 6. Order of Business and Debate
K. (fifth paragraph; no previous changes)
Items of new business submitted in accordance with this section shall be the first business item at all business meetings except the first business meeting of the Representative Assembly, and these new business items shall be considered for at least [one hour] 90 minutes in each session.
(no further changes)

IMPACT STATEMENT
This amendment would increase the amount of time that the Representative Assembly is required to spend on the consideration of new business at the beginning of each business session following the first session from at least one hour to at least ninety minutes.

Contact Person: Cathy Knight, Maryland

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 3

TITLE: To require that the Representative Assembly consider half of all remaining new business items before recessing each day.

Rule 6. Order of Business and Debate
K. (fifth paragraph; no previous changes)
Items of new business submitted in accordance with this section shall be the first business item at all business meetings except the first business meeting of the Representative Assembly, and these new business items shall be considered for at least one hour. However, the Representative Assembly shall not recess for the day until half of the remaining new business items filed in accordance with the rules and printed in the *RA Today* have been acted upon.
(no further changes)

IMPACT STATEMENT
This amendment would prohibit the Representative Assembly from recessing for the day until one-half of all remaining new business items appearing in that day's edition of *RA Today* had been acted upon. To illustrate the point, shown below are the number of new business items that would need to be acted upon each day, based upon the number of items listed each day in *RA Today* during the 2001 Representative Assembly.

	Number of NBIs in that day's *RA Today*	Minimum number of NBIs considered
July 4, 2001	52	26
July 5, 2001	87	30
July 6, 2001	87	15
July 7, 2001	87	16

Passage of the amendment would prevent NEA from establishing a fixed recess time for Representative Assembly sessions on the first, second, and third days, making timing uncertain for activities scheduled to occur after the Representative Assembly has recessed for the day, such as daily meetings of the Board of Directors Forum, state affiliate social events, and special interest caucuses. The Representative Assembly could not recess for the day until it had acted upon the required number of new business items and the time could not be accurately predicted in advance.

Contact Persons: Michael Cohan, New Jersey; Ramona Dreebin, California

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 4

TITLE: To allow that, following six consecutive terms, representatives of State, Retired, Student, and At-Large members may serve additional terms on the NEA Resolutions Committee, provided they have at least a one year break in service.

Rule 8. Definition of Resolutions, Committee, and Procedure
D. State, Retired, Student, and At-Large Members
(second paragraph; no previous changes)
Members shall serve for one (1) year commencing September 1. No person shall serve more than six (6) consecutive terms as a member. Following six (6) consecutive years elected service on the Resolutions Committee, a member may again seek election to the Committee after not serving on the Committee for one (1) full year.
(no further changes)

IMPACT STATEMENT
The Standing Rules now specify that representatives of State, Retired, Student, and At-Large members may not serve on the NEA Resolutions Committee for more than six (6) terms. This amendment would allow such representatives, following six consecutive terms on the Committee, to serve additional terms provided they have at least a one-year break in service.

Contact Person: Mike Campbell, Washington

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT 1

TITLE: To specify that, for members of dual-national state and local affiliates, Active membership in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) shall qualify for purposes of the membership requirements for eligibility to serve as an NEA executive officer, member of the NEA Board of Directors, and member of the NEA Executive Committee.

Article IV. Executive Officers
Section 2. Qualifications for Executive Officers
All candidates for the office of president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer shall have been Active members of the Association for at least two (2) years immediately preceding the election. For members of dual-national state and local affiliates, Active membership in AFT for at least two (2) years shall count as Active membership in the Association for at least two (2) years immediately preceding the election. All executive officers shall maintain Active membership in the Association.

Article V. Board of Directors
Section 2. Terms of Office
d. All candidates for NEA state director shall have been Active members of the Association for at least two (2) years immediately preceding the election. For members of dual-national state and local affiliates, Active membership in AFT for at least two (2) years shall count as Active membership in the Association for at least two (2) years immediately preceding the election. All state directors shall maintain throughout their terms of office Active membership in the Association.

Article VI. Executive Committee
Section 2. Qualifications and Terms of Office
b. All candidates shall have been Active members of the Association for at least two (2) years immediately preceding the election. For members of dual-national state and local affiliates, Active membership in AFT for at least two (2) years shall count as Active membership in the Association for at least two (2) years immediately preceding the election. All Executive Committee members shall maintain throughout their terms of office Active membership in the Association.

IMPACT STATEMENT
For members of dual-national state and local affiliates, this amendment would allow Active membership in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) to be counted for purposes of the membership requirement for eligibility to serve as an NEA executive officer, a member of the NEA Board of Directors, and a member of the NEA Executive Committee. This provision would be applied only for elections taking place within two years of the effective date of an NEA-AFT merger.

Contact Person: Carolyn Underwood, Florida

BYLAW AMENDMENT 1

TITLE: To establish dues for NEA Active members employed for seventy-five percent (75%) or less but more than fifty percent (50%) of the normal schedule for a full-time employee at three-quarters (3/4) of the regular dues for Active members in their job category.

Bylaw 2. Membership
Section 7. Membership Dues
d. The membership fee for persons eligible for Active membership who are regularly employed for seventy-five (75) percent or less, but greater than fifty (50) percent, of the normal schedule for a full-time employee, who are not employed as substitutes, and who are not eligible for membership as a full-time employee through another local association (as verified by the local association) shall be three-quarters (3/4) of the Active dues as appropriate. The membership fees for persons eligible for Active membership who are regularly employed for fifty (50) percent or less, but greater than twenty-five (25) percent, of the normal schedule for a full-time employee, who are not employed as substitutes, and who are not eligible for membership as a full-time employee through another local association (as verified by the local association) shall be one-half (1/2) of the Active dues as appropriate. The membership fee for persons eligible for Active membership who are regularly employed for twenty-five (25) percent or less of the normal schedule for a full-time employee, who are not employed as substitutes, and who are not eligible for membership as a full-time or part-time employee through another local association (as verified by the local association) shall be one-quarter (1/4) of the Active dues, as appropriate.

IMPACT STATEMENT
This amendment would create a new level of dues for NEA Active members who are regularly employed for seventy-five percent (75%) or less, but greater than fifty percent (50%) of the normal schedule for a full-time employee. The dues for these members would be three-quarters (3/4) of the regular dues for NEA Active members in their job category—i.e., professional education employees or education support professionals. This dues arrangement would be implemented in the same manner as the two other special dues arrangements already provided for in Bylaw 2-7(d).
An identical amendment was defeated by the 2001 Representative Assembly.

Contact Person: Mary Supple, Minnesota

BYLAW AMENDMENT 1A

TITLE: To provide that beginning with the 2002-03 membership year, Active members engaged in professional educational employment who pay annual dues calculated pursuant to Bylaw 2-7(a) will pay an additional one dollar ($1) per year to be allocated to the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education; other Active members, Reserve members, and Staff members will pay an additional fifty cents ($.50) per year to be allocated to the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education.

Bylaw 2 Membership
2-7 Membership Dues
a. Dues of Active members engaged in or on limited leave of absence from professional educational employment shall be .00225 times the national average annual salary of classroom teachers in the public elementary and secondary schools (rounded to the nearest dollar) plus .00055 of the national average annual salary of classroom teachers in the public elementary and secondary schools (rounded to the nearest dollar) to be allocated to UniServ grants according to the policy of the Board of Directors. The computation shall be based on salary data for the prior year as determined by NEA Research. [Beginning with the 1994-95 membership year and continuing through the 2003-04 membership year, the dues of Active members engaged in or on a limited leave of absence from professional educational employment shall be an amount calculated pursuant to the foregoing formula plus an additional one dollar ($1) to be allocated to the endowment fund of the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education.] (no further changes)

(new)**o.** Beginning with the 2002-03 membership year: (1) Active members engaged in or on limited leave of absence from professional educational employment who pay annual dues as calculated pursuant to Bylaw 2-7(a) (hereinafter "Base Annual Dues") shall pay an additional one dollar ($1) in annual dues; and (2) Active members who pay less than Base Annual Dues, Reserve members, and Staff members shall pay an additional fifty cents ($.50). These additional dues shall be allocated to the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education.

IMPACT STATEMENT
The 1987 Representative Assembly amended Bylaw 2-7(a) to add one dollar ($1) to the dues of Active members who paid dues calculated pursuant to Bylaw 2-7(a) for the four year period from the 1988-89 membership year through the 1992-93 membership year, and to allocate the additional one dollar to the endowment fund of the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (now named the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education; "NFIE"). As implemented, Active members who paid less than the membership dues calculated pursuant to Bylaw 2-7(a), Staff members, and Reserve members paid an additional fifty cents for this purpose. The 1994 Representative Assembly amended Bylaw 2-7(a) to continue the arrangement for an additional ten years—through the 2003-04 membership year.
Under the proposed amendment, the foregoing arrangement would become permanent—except that the additional dues would simply be allocated to NFIE, rather than to its endowment fund. The amendment also would make explicit the obligation of certain Active members, Staff members, and Reserve members to pay an additional fifty cents ($.50) in dues.

Contact: NEA Board of Directors

BYLAW AMENDMENT 1B

TITLE: To change the allocation of membership dues between NEA and the American Federation of Teachers for certain members of dual-national state affiliates.

Bylaw 2 Membership
2-7 Membership Dues
m. (1) Except as otherwise provided in Bylaw 2-7.m. (2) with regard to members of certain dual-national local affiliates, mem-

2-7 Membership Dues

m. (1) Except as otherwise provided in Bylaw 2-7.m. (2) with regard to members of certain dual-national local affiliates, members of a dual-national state affiliate shall maintain membership in the Association and the American Federation of Teachers where eligible, and the total combined national dues that such members pay shall be not less than the Association dues for members in the relevant membership category. If a member of a dual-national state affiliate is a member of the Association and the American Federation of Teachers, said member's total combined national dues shall be allocated between the two organizations in a manner that reflects the comparative number of members in the relevant membership category who were eligible for Association membership in the respective Association and American Federation of Teachers state affiliates during the membership year immediately preceding the date on which the dual-national state affiliate came into existence as a legal entity (hereinafter "allocation percentage"), provided that;

(a) if, during any of the first five (5) membership years following the affiliation of a dual-national affiliate, the number of such members exceeds by more than three percent (3%) the number of such members during the immediately preceding membership year, each organization shall receive fifty percent (50%) of the total combined national dues of such excess members;

(b) beginning with the sixth membership year following the affiliation of a dual-national state affiliate, if the number of such members during any membership year exceeds the number of such members during the immediately preceding membership year, each organization shall receive fifty percent (50%) of the total combined national dues of such excess members; and

(c) the Association shall not receive pursuant to Section m(1)(a) or m(1)(b) above, more from any such member than the allocation percentage, or fifty percent (50%), whichever is appropriate, as applied to the Association dues for the relevant membership category.

If the member is a member of the Association but is not eligible for membership in the American Federation of Teachers, the Association shall receive the full amount of said member's total combined national dues.

IMPACT STATEMENT

Under current Bylaw 2-7(m)(1), the membership dues of members of dual-national state affiliates are allocated between NEA and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) based upon the comparative number of members in the relevant membership category who were eligible for NEA membership in the respective NEA and AFT state affiliates during the membership year immediately preceding the merger ("allocation percentage"). NEA and AFT have agreed to a different arrangement for the allocation of dues generated by membership growth in dual-national state affiliates. The NEA Guidelines for State Affiliate Mergers have been amended by the Board of Directors to reflect this agreement, but the agreement cannot become effective until Bylaw 2-7m.(1) is similarly amended. The proposed amendment makes Bylaw 2-7m.(1) and the NEA Guidelines for State Affiliate Mergers consistent.

Specifically, the proposed amendment provides for a fifty-fifty (50%/50%) allocation of membership dues resulting from membership growth in excess of three percent (3%) during the first five (5) membership years following affiliation of a dual-national state affiliate; and beginning with the sixth membership year following affiliation of a dual-national state affiliate, it provides for a fifty-fifty (50%/50%) allocation of membership dues resulting from all membership growth over what the membership was during the fifth membership year following such affiliation.

Contact: NEA Board of Directors

BYLAW AMENDMENT 2

TITLE: To add "Native Hawaiian" to the definition of ethnic minority.

Bylaw 12. Definitions

12-1 Definitions of Terms

h. *Ethnic minority:* Ethnic minority shall mean those persons designated as ethnic minority by statistics published by the United States Bureau of the Census. This designation shall specifically include American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other [and] Pacific

Candidates Running for NEA Office

Reg Weaver

Candidate for NEA President

At a time when the very principle and concept of public education is being challenged I reflect on when Franklin Roosevelt challenged 1940s America saying, "This generation has a rendezvous with destiny." Today, our generation has a rendezvous with responsibility—a special responsibility to ensure that every child receives a world-class education.

If our policymakers' actions matched their rhetoric regarding students, it would be reflected in our schools. Sadly, this is not the case. That is why it is up to NEA to continue advancing the cause of students and public education.

Meeting our 'special responsibility' will require a focused, ongoing effort. Together, we can provide the voice and advocacy necessary to make America's students and public schools the priorities they should be.

Denise Rockwell

Candidate for NEA President

If a newspaper ad was published to recruit our next President, it might read:

"Bold Vision. Passionate Advocate. Strong, Clear, Intelligent Voice necessary to carry our message from the School House, to the State House, to the White House. Position requires leadership skills and high energy to solve difficult challenges and unite an organization of extraordinary talent and diversity. Requirements include: recent classroom experience, and an unwavering belief that it takes our entire education family — Teachers, ESP, Higher Education, Students and Retirees — to deliver quality education and lifelong learning."

As a 28-year full time teacher, former president of NEA's largest local affiliate, and former member of the NEA Board of Directors and Executive Committee, I welcome your evaluation as a candidate seeking the office of NEA President.

Dennis Van Roekel

Candidate for Vice-President

Now is the time of opportunities. To *restore public confidence in public education,* we must build a broader constituency in support of public education. We must reawaken a national recognition of and appreciation for the value of public education to society's domestic and economic future. We must take the lead in defining the future of education reform or be relegated to spectator status in our own profession. It is up to us to assume the leadership and take the action necessary to define public education's role for the next century.

I have confidence in our ability, working together, to advance public education, expand the rights for education employees, and advocate for human and civil rights. Together, we will make our dreams of today tomorrow's reality.

Dan Sakota

Candidate for NEA Secretary-Treasurer

We must elect leaders who are willing to take risks, be bold and embrace our diversity while remaining focused that *every* student deserves a *quality public* education. Our next set of officers must be knowledgeable, compassionate, and genuine in their ideals and motives to continue to build a stronger organization that will readily accept the increasing challenges facing us. We must seize our opportunities and set the pace for public education.

Leadership is...

- Doing whatever it takes to honor your word.
- Doing whatever it takes to make a difference through your work.
- Doing whatever it takes to listen to your membership.
- Doing whatever it takes to give hope to the people around you.

Let's keep the light shining brightly for NEA by electing *quality* teachers!

Lily Eskelsen

Candidate for NEA Secretary-Treasurer

The NEA is based on profound principles: A quality public education for *all* students; respect for *all* the people who work in America's public schools and colleges; and human and civil rights for *all.*

NEA fights for these principles daily. And we face daily attacks by forces trying to stop us.

We cannot be discouraged. Our principles energize us! I believe a rock-solid NEA and strong affiliates are an unbeatable combination. Our strength depends on proven leadership in our schools, the Association, and the community.

NEA leaders must understand budgets, organizing, and strategic planning. They must be committed and competent. But they must be more. They must be fighters. Because when we inspire 2.6 million members to fight for our principles, nothing can stop us.

Lee Ann Prielipp

Candidate for NEA Secretary-Treasurer

Our members must see NEA as a powerful and visible force for public education and their professional interests. They must be proud of their membership in NEA. Association officers must know how to marshal our resources, financial and membership, to achieve our goals. During my eight years as President and Vice-president in Washington state, our leadership team worked with our members to successfully build strong public support for education and...yes...better school employee compensation. The Secretary-Treasurer must be an effective part of a strong leadership team! The Secretary-Treasurer must maintain NEA's strong financial base in order to organize our members for success. Most importantly, the Secretary-Treasurer must be a person with experience, skills, and commitment.

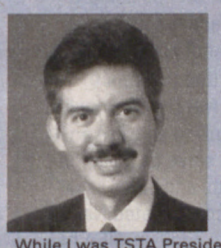
Roger Sharp

Candidate for NEA Secretary-Treasurer

The NEA Secretary-Treasurer must provide vision and leadership that supports student success, enhances teacher and ESP quality, and builds school system and Association capacity, as well as public, parental, and business support as the budgetary priorities of the NEA.

We must assist members in developing systems of positive school accountability that improve public schools rather than label them as failing schools. As we have recently learned, we must also react to any crises that may develop.

I am proud to be an educator, an NEA member, and an immediate past member of the NEA Executive Committee. I believe NEA must continue to provide strong leadership and clear vision that will shape the future of public education.



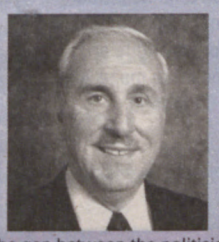
Ignacio Salinas, Jr.

Candidate for Executive Committee

My fight to improve our children's education did not start when I first put my name on the ballot. It started as a TSTA/NEA member in a high school classroom. Being a former special education teacher and school principal gave me the opportunity to see first hand how education is the key to every child's opportunity.

While I was TSTA President and a state representative, the Texas legislature passed a record teacher pay raise and guaranteed state money for health insurance for public school employees.

I believe the NEA Executive Committee should encourage a strong partnership between the national and state affiliates so that together we can ensure that from rough terrains come real results.



Michael Billirakis

Candidate for Executive Committee

Since I became a member of the NEA Executive Committee last year, I've concluded that the issues we faced while I was a full-time officer with the Ohio Education Association are shared nationwide. In every state we have students in high priority schools where we must close the achievement gap. We must also close the gap between the politicians' rhetoric of "all kids can learn" and "leave no child behind" and the reality of under funded mandates, low salaries, and insufficient resources. The work that you do—that we do—helps bridge that gap between rhetoric and reality. I am proud to be your NEA colleague!

Glenn Johnson

Candidate for Executive Committee

For the past 32 years I have been proud to be a math teacher, a public school employee, and an active member of the NEA. Every day NEA members make a difference in the lives of the children who attend our great public schools. Many of us make a difference not only because we work in public schools but because we are activists in the Association advocating for members, students, and for better public schools.

Today public education faces many new and different challenges. NEA must have effective leaders who can respond to them. It is imperative that NEA provide the leadership necessary to prepare America's children for an ever-changing world while implementing programs that support affiliates and members' efforts to improve our public schools.

Marsha Smith

Candidate for Executive Committee

Employment: team leader and health and physical education resource teacher at the Earle B. Wood Middle School in Rockville, Maryland. Dallas Independent School District, Dallas, Texas. Trenton Public Schools, Trenton, New Jersey.

Association Experience: *Local*—Montgomery County Education Association Board of Directors, building representative, Instruction and Professional Development Committee, Bargaining Team, Technology Team with Board of Education. *State*—Maryland State Teachers Association Board of Directors, Maryland Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board vice chair and interim chair, "And Justice for All" Minority Task Force chair, Instruction and Professional Development Committee liaison, State Association Staff Bargaining Team. *National*—NEA Board of Directors, Strategic Plan and Budget Committee, Constitution and Bylaws Committee, Education International delegate.

Your Dues Dollars

A Report from NEA Secretary-Treasurer Dennis Van Roekel

As NEA Secretary-Treasurer, I am pleased to report to you figures excerpted from NEA's audited financial statements for the fiscal and membership year ended August 31, 2001. Once again NEA experienced a positive year in 2000 – 2001.

Not only did we increase membership by adding 87,160 new members to our organization this year, but also our General Operating Fund Unrestricted Net Assets increased by $2,332,722 as a result of net revenues exceeding expenses (Consolidated Net Assets increased by $316,341). The increase of Net Assets and continuous growth of new members add strength to our already fiscally sound organization that will enable us to build confidence in public education and to advocate for our member's needs. Each of you should be proud of your contribution in making NEA strong and responsive to the students we serve and the people who spend their lives in public education.

The Deloitte & Touche auditor's opinion letter stated that their work was performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. It was a 'clean opinion' issued without any qualifying comments. An unqualified opinion is the best kind of opinion letter to receive.

The Consolidated Statements of Financial Position presents the Association's assets, liabilities, and net assets as of August 31, 2001. One important indicator of an organization's financial strength is the Net Assets (the difference between total assets and total liabilities). Net Assets should be a positive balance and sufficient not only to stabilize an organization in troubled times, but also to serve as a source of funds for special projects, future growth, and other fiscal demands as deemed appropriate. NEA's consolidated Net Asset Balance is now over $78.9 million. In addition, NEA has continuously demonstrated a positive Current Ratio, which means that NEA is in a solid position to meet our current obligations by using cash and other current assets.

The Comparative General Operating Fund Statement of Activity and Changes in Net Assets reflects total Revenue and Expenses by Strategic Priorities for years 2001 and 2000.

Membership growth, fiscal stability and strength, and sound allocation of NEA's resources combined to make 2000-2001 an outstanding year for the National Education Association.

Note: A complete copy of the NEA audit report is available upon request.

National Education Association of the United States

Consolidated Statements of Financial Position by Fund at August 31, 2001
With Comparative totals as of August 31, 2000

	General Operating Fund	Special Purpose Funds	Capital Improvement Fund	Consolidating Entries*	2001 Total Funds	2000 Total Funds
Current Assets	$ 59,044,428	$ 11,979,274	$ –	$ (777,222)	$ 70,246,480	$ 64,341,703
Long-term Assets	28,322,433	13,601,053	53,730,370	(4,114,113)	91,539,743	94,081,144
Total Assets	$ 87,366,861	$ 25,580,327	$ 53,730,370	$ (4,891,335	$ 161,786,223	$158,422,847
Current Liabilities	$ 25,642,835	$ 5,967,013	$ 4,334,707	$ (777,222)	$ 35,167,333	$ 29,315,441
Long-term Liabilities	5,713,463	9,577,671	33,731,607	(1,376,948)	47,645,793	50,450,650
Total Liabilities	31,356,298	15,544,684	38,066,314	(2,154,170)	82,813,126	79,766,091
Unrestricted Net Assets						
Undesignated Net Assets	28,054,057	10,035,643	15,664,056	(2,737,165)	51,016,591	49,228,855
Net Assets Designated for Postretirement Benefits	27,956,506	–	–	–	27,956,506	29,427,901
Total Unrestricted Net Assets	56,010,563	10,035,643	15,664,056	(2,737,165)	78,973,097	78,656,756
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	$ 87,366,861	$ 25,580,327	$ 53,730,370	$ (4,891,335)	$ 161,786,223	$158,422,847

*All intercompany accounts and transactions have been eliminated in consolidation.

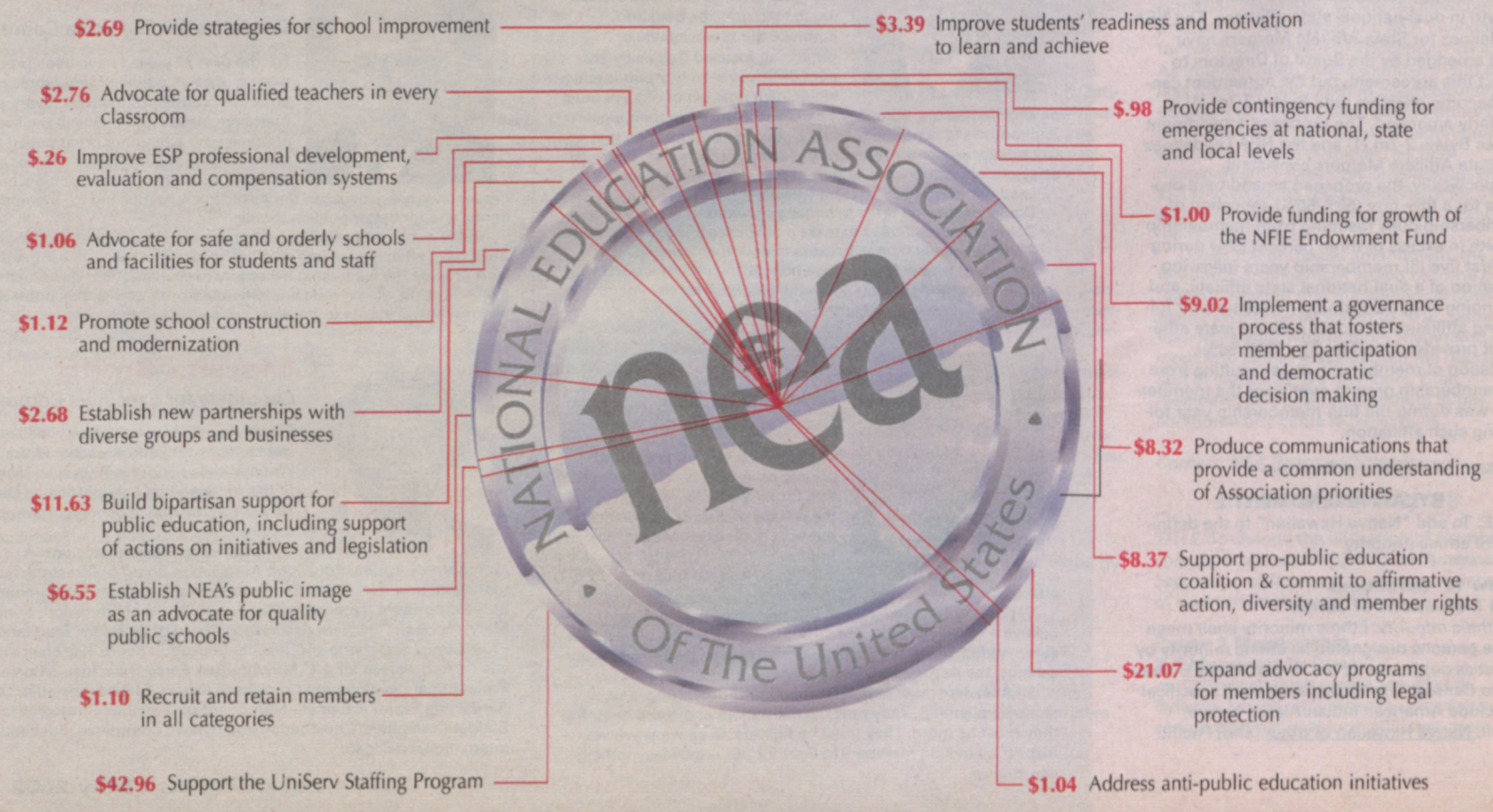
National Education Association of the United States

General Operating Fund — Statement of Activity and Changes in Net Assets
Years Ended August 31, 2001 and 2000

	2001	2000
Total Revenue	$244,676,421	$225,713,374
Expenses by Strategic Priorities:		
Student Achievement – Provide students with the skills and knowledge to function successfully in school	4,140,961	3,896,281
Teacher Quality – Ensure a qualified teacher in every classroom	3,735,301	3,619,619
School System Capacity – Build learning environments that support student success	7,204,222	6,634,971
Public, Parental & Business Support – Promote stronger public, parental, and business support for public education	33,878,002	23,004,164
Association Capacity Building – Mobilize at the local, state, and national levels for the resources basic to quality schools	112,286,866	108,260,137
Administrative Services & Program Support – provide the administrative and programmatic support vital to the achievement of NEA's goals	81,098,347	79,310,271
Total Unrestricted Expenses	242,343,699	224,725,443
Changes in Net Assets from Operating Activities	2,332,722	987,931
Unrestricted Net Assets, Beginning of Year	53,677,841	52,689,910
Unrestricted Net Assets, End of Year	$56,010,563	$53,677,841

How your 2001-2002 dues dollars are allocated

The following is a breakdown of how NEA dues dollars are allocated to support and represent its members and affiliates in their efforts to achieve the mission of the NEA. $126.00 NEA Dues (Active member, professionally employed).


$2.69 Provide strategies for school improvement
$2.76 Advocate for qualified teachers in every classroom
$.26 Improve ESP professional development, evaluation and compensation systems
$1.06 Advocate for safe and orderly schools and facilities for students and staff
$1.12 Promote school construction and modernization
$2.68 Establish new partnerships with diverse groups and businesses
$11.63 Build bipartisan support for public education, including support of actions on initiatives and legislation
$6.55 Establish NEA's public image as an advocate for quality public schools
$1.10 Recruit and retain members in all categories
$42.96 Support the UniServ Staffing Program
$3.39 Improve students' readiness and motivation to learn and achieve
$.98 Provide contingency funding for emergencies at national, state and local levels
$1.00 Provide funding for growth of the NFIE Endowment Fund
$9.02 Implement a governance process that fosters member participation and democratic decision making
$8.32 Produce communications that provide a common understanding of Association priorities
$8.37 Support pro-public education coalition & commit to affirmative action, diversity and member rights
$21.07 Expand advocacy programs for members including legal protection
$1.04 Address anti-public education initiatives
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
nea
Of The United States

Is Summer Vacation Worth It?

Q: My husband hates spending money on summer vacations. He promises we'll do "something fun," but we end up mowing the lawn or playing badminton. How can I avoid another disappointing summer?

A: I'll bet therapists are swamped with this question right now. Summer vacations cost so much, there are so many things that can go wrong and there's so much pressure to have fun and be a happy family. I suspect most people have trouble relaxing for the reasons you mention. They fret about the cost and they worry that they won't have enough fun to justify it.

Vacations are the only thing guaranteed to cause an argument between me and my husband. When the day arrives, I'm packed and ready at 7 a.m., but he starts some project he says he must finish before he leaves. Once he loaded his entire computer, printer, and fax machine into the trunk of the car. I envisioned my husband snuggled up to his computer while I had lots of quality time with the kids. I think you have to learn what motivates people to approach vacations the way they do.

Many people hate to be without structure, they hate to travel, and they hate to spend money on what they consider frivolity. Perhaps you can put your finger on what it is your husband objects to and work around it. If not, you and the kids might have to plan your own trip. Or you could make two trips, one short, inexpensive one that your husband (or wife) might enjoy and another longer one for the rest of you. You needn't miss your vacation because he doesn't enjoy it.

I think a successful vacation comes from doing less rather than more and making an effort to accommodate everyone. In our case, my daughter likes to sleep until noon, my son wants to fit in some serious sports like mountain biking, my husband hates to be rushed, and I need to have a couple of hours each day alone to walk and think. I plan all the vacations, and I always ask each person: What two or three things do you most want to do? What would you be most disappointed to miss? I also save money during the year so that the money is set aside when we're ready to leave.

A vacation can be a chore. But it can also be the highlight of the year for your family. Don't skip it.

Q: What do you think about 529 plans for college savings?

A: These state-sponsored plans, which are named for the section of the Internal Revenue Code that permits them, are great—so much so that I plan to switch from an UGMA, or Uniform Gift to Minor's Account, for my son to a 529 plan.

The good news is that beginning in 2002, withdrawals from the plans are free of federal tax. The bad news is that each state's plan is different and evaluating them takes some time.

You don't have to use the plan in your home state, but there might be a tax advantage to doing so. A great Web site to find out more information on 529 plans can be found at www.savingforcollege.com.

Q: Can I set up a separate pension system for my summer business?

A: Perhaps your best option is to create an IRA for this money. The limit for IRA contributions goes up this year from $2,000 in 2001 to $3,000 in 2002. That's a nice boost.

You can contribute up to $3,000 of self-employment income that might come from tutoring or any kind of summer business. Check with your financial advisor about your eligibility to make/deduct these contributions.

Q: Our son wants to take a year off after college to travel. Will employers think he's lazy or irresponsible?

A: I think it depends on how ambitious he intends to be after that year of traveling. If he's trying to put off working, perhaps indefinitely, that's no good. If he wants to gain a bit of life experience and then has solid career plans, that's a lot better.

There's a lot of pressure on kids to mature early. Many colleges are happy to accept students who decide to put a year between high school and college. I don't know why the same thing wouldn't be true about a year after college. ✔

Mary Rowland is an author and contributor to several financial planning magazines. E-mail your personal finance questions to MoneyQuestions@neamb.com.

In the past decade, NEA members have used the NEA Car Rental Program to travel over 58,000,000 miles—the equivalent of 2,300 trips around the equator, or 120 trips to the moon and back!

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

Summer is almost here, and NEA Member Benefits has some great programs to "make the livin' easy!"

Log vacation miles on someone else's vehicle by renting a car through the NEA Car Rental Program. Hertz and Alamo both offer NEA members year-round discounts and free, unlimited mileage on most car rentals.

If you're traveling with your spouse, you can save even more by having the additional driver fee waived. The Hertz #1 Club and Alamo Quicksilver Program also expedite the reservation process and offer express pickup and drop-off. To obtain your free Hertz and Alamo/NEA member discount cards and savings coupons, call the Member Service Center at 800/637-4636 or log on to www.neamb.com today!

Summer is also a key time to move to a new home. NEA Members can find great rates and service by obtaining a mortgage through the NEA Home Financing Program.

Are you a renter dreaming of buying your first home? First-time buyers can take advantage of special low- and no-money down loans that feature no maximum income restrictions. Plus, flexible credit guidelines can get you into a new home sooner than you might think.

For more information on the wide variety of home loans available through the NEA Home Financing Program, call 800/NEA-4-YOU (800/632-4968). When you close on your new mortgage or refinance, you'll also get a complimentary four-day "Driveaway Getaway" vacation package as a bonus. Find out about it in our display ad on page 53 of this issue of *NEA Today*.

Thrifty Educator

This month's tips come from Vera Crisafulli, a kindergarten teacher at Jefferson School in Glendive, Montana, and from Gail Dacus, a sixth grade teacher at C.T. Walker Magnet School in Augusta, Georgia.

Crisafulli: It's easy to recycle paper egg cartons. In the spring, cut the egg container apart into separate cups and clip them all until they have four points. Have the children paint them, put a pipe cleaner through the bottom, attach a leaf, and it becomes a tulip for spring or Mother's Day.

Another fun use is to attach a pipe cleaner to the painted cups and make cute baskets to hang on an Easter or May Day tree. They're also handy to use for a place to lay paint brushes while the children are painting.

Dacus: Shaving cream removes pencil and pen marks from desk tops. I put shaving cream on each child's desk and then we do a learning activity with the cream.

For example, I ask students to draw a picture in the shaving cream that illustrates a certain fraction or geometric shape or they write their spelling words. The inexpensive kind of cream works just as well as the expensive kind.

Got an idea?

If you have a suggestion for how your colleagues can save money at school, send it along to neatoday@nea.org.

The Power of Visuals

Becoming 'visually literate' will lead to better instruction and more prepared students.

VISUAL LITERACY: LEARN TO SEE, SEE TO LEARN
By **Lynell Burmark**
115 pp. $22.95 paperback (non-ASCD members)
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
To order visit www.ascd.org or call 800/933-2723.

EXCERPT

"The primary literacy of the 21st century will be visual: pictures, graphics, images of every kind...it's no longer enough to be able to read and write. Our students must learn to process both words and pictures. They must be able to move gracefully and fluently between text and images, between literal and figurative worlds."

Today's children have always known a world of competing sound bites and digital images. Their attention spans are shorter than ever. Short of recruiting teachers from the ranks of MTV stars, how can educators compete for their students' attention?

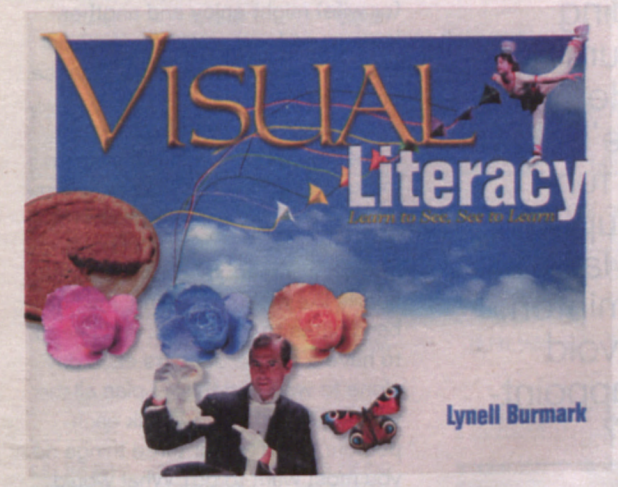
According to *Visual Literacy: Learn to See, See to Learn*, educators don't need to compete; they just need to adapt. Traditional instruction practices—the old way of teaching—simply won't work, says Lynell Burmark, author of the book and associate in the Thornburg Center for Professional Development.

"It's time for teachers to take advantage of the way kids entertain themselves today, to employ those same media and the thinking habits they foster for the betterment of student learning," she writes.

How? Through visual literacy—the 21st century's new "basic skill." According to the book, incorporating visuals—color, art, photos, fonts—into lessons can enhance and accelerate classroom instruction. Teachers will reach their students faster, more efficiently, and more effectively when they punctuate what they say with images.

The supporting facts presented throughout the book are convincing: Researchers have found that humans process visual information 60,000 times faster than textual information. They've also concluded that visual aids can improve learning by up to 400 percent.

But simply throwing a clipart image onto your handout or using



a different font during a presentation won't achieve visual literacy, Burmark writes. Like the process of learning to read, visual literacy is a learned skill, not an intuitive one. It can be achieved only by studying the techniques used to create images, learning the vocabulary of shapes and colors, and identifying characteristics that give an image its meaning.

Fast-moving and chock full of insights and facts, the book is an excellent resource to help teachers and students become more effective communicators and understand how to use the power of visuals to their advantage.

A particularly interesting chapter demonstrates how educators can use color to create specific moods for learning. Because our minds are biologically programmed to respond to certain colors, writes Burmark, colorful and well-thought-out instruction materials can help teachers accelerate learning and increase retention.

Of all the findings that Burmark presents, educators would probably be most interested in the conclusions of a German psychologist who found light blue, yellow, yellow-green, and orange to be the best colors for facilitating learning inside classrooms.

Burmark also takes the reader into schools across the United States and Canada and introduces teachers who describe their strategic, practical use of visual expression and technology.

Visual Literacy offers a wealth of replicable ideas and activities, as well as resources for free lesson plans, color images, books, and Web sites to help the reader become more "visually literate."

In addition to gaining practical knowledge, readers will also come away with a valuable insight: Visual literacy is imperative in today's schools because it is ever-present in the business world.

The author writes: "A lack of visual literacy is as much a handicap as the inability to read or write." After finishing this book, readers are bound to come away agreeing wholeheartedly. ✔

—Dina S. Gómez

BOOKS by NEA Members

Glenna's Seeds
By Nancy Edwards, illustrated by Sarah Hoctor

Glenna's Seeds is a whimsical picture book that illustrates how one small random act of kindness grows and multiplies. A packet of marigold seeds creates a chain of kindness among different people who live on the same block. By the story's end, a once empty street is transformed into a place full of colorful flowers, thoughtful neighbors, delicious food, and happiness. The inside back cover of each book contains a packet of flower seeds. $9.95. Published by the Child Welfare League of America. Order through www.amazon.com.

Teaching Life Skills Through Chess: A Guide For Educators and Counselors
By Fernando Moreno

NEA member and guidance counselor Fernando Moreno presents chess as an analogy to life and offers teachers a model that helps students learn to make good choices, build self-confidence, develop critical thinking skills, and improve academic skills. The author supplies methods to teach chess for counseling purposes, including sample lesson plans. $12.95 from American Literary Press. Call 410/882-7700 or 800/873-2003.

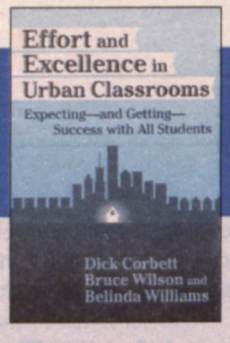
Energizers: Calisthenics for the Mind
By Carl Olson

This book jump starts the learning process through 71 exercises and activities that energize the mind and senses. Activities are grouped under three classifications. *Energizers* activate the emotional nature of the group. *Games* consist of organized play that includes competition. *Initiatives* create an in-depth analysis of thoughts, feelings, impressions, and reactions and must be followed with processing questions. $10.95. Order online at www.educationalmedia.com or write to Educational Media Corporation, Box 21311, Minneapolis, MN 55421-0311.

Hyper Harry
By Patricia Aust

This book tells the story of a young, hyperactive child with outrageous behavior and how his actions affect everyone around him. Older brother Ted is desperate to change his little brother Harry's hyperactive behavior as it spirals out of control at home, school, and in the neighborhood. $5.99 from New Concepts Publishing. To order visit www.newconceptspublishing.com/youngadult.htm.

NEW from the NEA Professional Library



Effort and Excellence in Urban Classrooms: Expecting—and Getting—Success with All Students
Copublished by NEA and Columbia Teachers College Press
Dick Corbett, Bruce Wilson, and Belinda Williams
178 pp. $21.95 members
$23.95 nonmembers
2021-9-00-FN

This timely volume explores in great detail how educators closed the performance gap for low-income students by linking expectations and results. Drawing heavily on the words and experiences of students, teachers, and parents, this book examines the successful journey of students who traditionally had not succeeded academically. Described as a "must read for those who are serious about closing the achievement gap," *Effort and Excellence* reveals how these educators enabled their students to be competitive academically with anyone.

EXCERPT

Everyone agreed that the driving motto of the school was that every student would complete every assignment at a level sufficient to get a B. Students worked on unfinished and unsatisfactory assignments until they were complete and satisfactory, all the while keeping up with new work. A poster on the wall of one teacher's classroom defined the grading scale:

A = Above and beyond

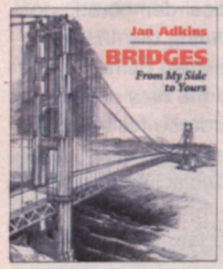
B = The basics, you know your stuff

I = Incomplete, you need more time and support

To order, call 800/229-4200, or check the Web at www.nea.org/books.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Bridges: Connecting People and Places



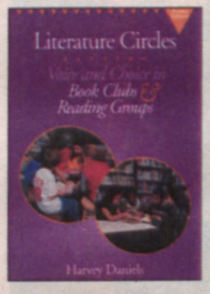
Bridges—we see them all the time and often drive on them, but do we really know the history behind them? In *Bridges: From My Side to Yours* Jan Adkins explores how bridges came about, what the first kind of bridge was (post-and-beam), and how the structures have evolved into the bridges we see today in New York, San Francisco, and London. The book even goes into detail about unsuccessful bridges. Some have collapsed because of the way they were built or the materials that were used. A book full of striking black-and-white drawings, *Bridges: From My Side to Yours* explores these constructed wonders from around the world. $25.90 from Roaring Book Press. Call 800/462-4703 to order.

Mormonism in America

The history of Mormons in America is full of triumphs and hardships. Claudia and Richard Bushman's *Building the Kingdom*, takes the reader through the major events of Mormonism in America. Beginning with its roots in New York and continuing to the westward trek to Utah, the Bushmans trace the Mormons' first years in Salt Lake City, the role of women in the religion, and changes in the faith since 1945. Providing a clear and concise description of the religion, *Building the Kingdom* also explores its problems, including church problems, polygamy, and family problems due to church service. $9.95 from Oxford University Press. Go to www.oup.com to order.

Reading for Understanding

The concept is fairly simple: getting kids to read by creating small, peer-led groups that discuss books to understand them. This is Harvey Daniels' innovative concept, and it has sparked student literature circles all around the country. In his revised version of *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups*, Daniels offers new methods for preparing students for literature circles and training them to use their time effectively, as well as a guide for teachers on how to grade the groups. With the help of 20 teachers, Daniels has improved the ways to implement reading groups and make them more effective. He covers all aspects of the program, and includes the latest research on literature circles. $22.50 from Pembroke Publishers. To order visit www.stenhouse.com.



Tall Tales Revisited

Most people know the stories of Johnny Appleseed and Davy Crockett, but not many know that the stories told about these two were based on real people. *Ten Tall Tales* goes one step further than just summarizing the tall tale. If the story is based on a person or a group of people, it provides the background as well as a bibliography of books that may interest students. For each tale, the book lists Web sites and suggests activities. For example, one activity has students write about their summer vacations in a tall tale format. Suitable for grades 3-8, *Ten Tall Tales* by Phyllis J. Perry is available for $15.95 from Upstart Books. Call 800/448-4887.

Bury My Bones In America

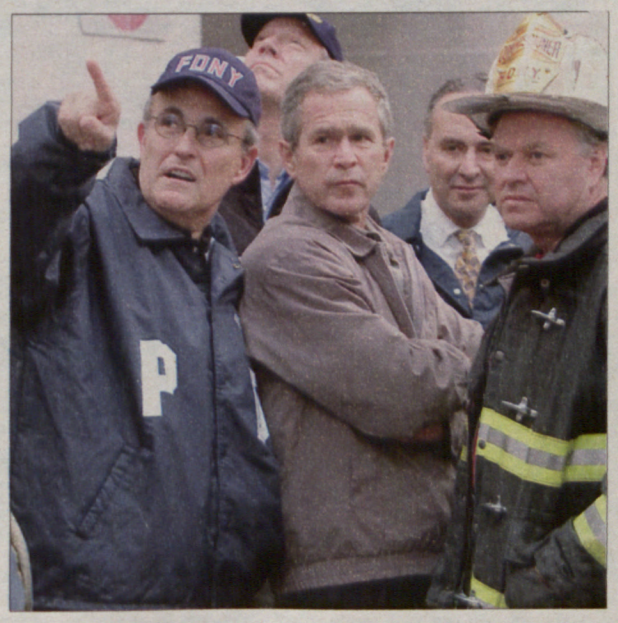
By Lani Ah Tye Farkas

This book tells the saga of a Chinese family in California from 1852 to 1996. The author follows her ancestors from China as their trail leads to tragedy and heartbreak, as well as brilliant success in America. Witness this group gradually integrate into present day American society as years of Chinese traditions unfold and blend with the New World. Illustrated with photographs, maps, and drawings. $24.95 from Carl Mautz Publishing. Order online at www.carlmautz.com.

TVTIPS

In Memoriam: September 11, 2001, New York City

HBO, May 26, 10 p.m., ET, check local listings.



This documentary follows Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and his staff through the events of September 11, 2001. Drawing on unprecedented access to city hall and the mayor's staff, the program chronicles responses from the first realization of what happened—through smoke and fire, through rescue and recovery, through despair and tears—to a newfound strength that would emerge in the spirit of a new America. *In Memoriam: September 11, 2001* combines archival documents, eyewitness accounts, news footage, and never-before-seen footage from independent and amateur filmmakers.

KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., provides these listings. For additional listings and information, check the Web at www.kidsnet.org.

TVTIPS

U.N. Special Session

CNN, CNN Student News, week of May 6, 4:30 a.m., ET, check local listings.

This CNN Student News presentation teams up with the United Nations for a weeklong look at the state of children and young people around the world. The discussion will focus on health, welfare, education, and youth involvement of children. A companion Web site can be found at www.CNNstudentnews.com.

Search for the First Human

PBS, May 8, 9 p.m., ET, check local listings.

In October 2000, 13 bones were found in Kenya in a volcanic layer dating back to around six million years. Given the name "Orrorin," which means "original man" in the local Tugen dialect, the bones are the oldest hominid remains ever discovered. In this one-hour special, scientists study these bones, hoping to rewrite the story of human evolution.

Founding Brothers

The History Channel, May 27-28, 9 p.m., ET, check local listings.

Based on the current best-selling book *Founding Brothers*, and acting as a sequel to *Founding Fathers*, this special tells how Washington, John Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Franklin, Hamilton, and Aaron Burr grappled with the task of actually making a theoretical democratic government work. During the 1790s, these great statesmen came together, defined the new republic, and directed its course for the coming centuries. A misstep at any one of hundreds of crucial junctures could easily have broken the country apart before it began.

Ape Man: The Story of Human Evolution

A&E, A&E Classroom, May 28-31, 7 a.m., ET, check local listings.

Beginning with the mysterious phenomenon that allowed humans to branch off from apes, continuing through the invention of tools and fire, and ending with humanity's creativity and the power of language, this four-part series hosted by Walter Cronkite explores human evolution. The final segment explores the ongoing debates between evolutionists, creationists, and the scientific community about the origin of the species. Leading evolutionists also risk a glimpse into the future of human beings.

Angelina Ballerina

PBS, May, ET, check local listings.

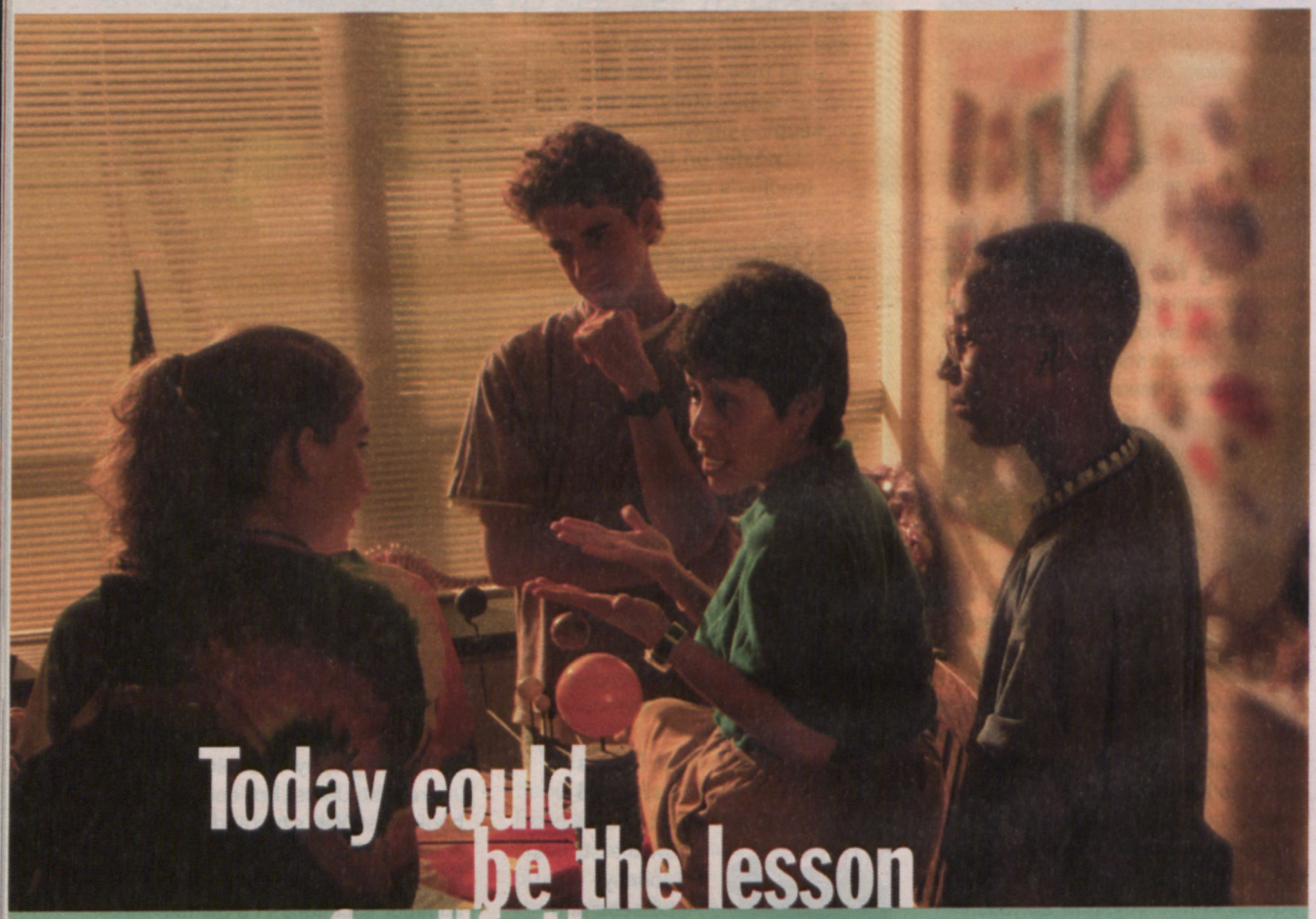
Based on the books by Katherine Holabird, this new animated series follows the adventures of Angelina Ballerina, a dance-struck little mouse. While Angelina dreams of ballet stardom, she always manages to propel herself into humorous escapades. Each escapade teaches valuable life lessons about honesty, determination, and a range of other positive values. A companion Web site that contains activities for children can be found at www.angelinaballerina.com.

A History of Britain

The History Channel, May, ET, check local listings.

This six-part program from History Channel Classroom chronicles the

early history of England. The special examines the arrival of the Anglo Saxons, the Norman Dynasty, and finally three of the most famous and misunderstood kings in English history: Henry II, Richard I, and John.



Let's face it. Health class isn't enough to counter all the bad information kids are getting about drugs. So whether you teach science, social studies, theater or language arts, we're making it easy to incorporate drug awareness education into the standards-based material you already need to cover. Log on to **www.teachersguide.org** to find classroom activities designed to help you talk about drugs with your students.

Anti-drug lessons last a lifetime.

TEACHERS.
THE ANTI-DRUG.

Beyond Barbed Wire

PBS, May, ET, check local listings. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, 120,000 Japanese Americans were taken from their homes and sent to internment camps ringed with armed guards and barbed wire. Despite this, thousands of young Japanese American men volunteered for service in the U.S. armed services. This special looks at the all-Japanese 100th Infantry Battalion/442nd

Regimental Combat Team, which became the most decorated unit in American military history.

Shaping Character with Animation

Cartoon Network, Spring 2002 (launches nationally in Fall 2002). With character development playing an ever-greater role in American schools, Cartoon Network has initiated a national character education program for middle school students. Designed to aid educators in creating caring, principled, and responsible adults, *Animate Your World: Shaping Character* uses animation technology to bring character education into the curriculum. The educational program focuses on three character behaviors: respect

for self, respect for others, and responsibility to community. The program, which is available on CD-ROM, also features a companion Web site at www.animateyourworld.com.

All about Oceans: For Kids

KIDSNET, which provides these TV listings, and SeaWeb have launched an interactive online study guide at www.kidsnet.org/seaweb for grades 4-8. The guide features an introduction by Peter Benchley as well as The Ocean Report, a series of 90-second radio programs relating to a variety of issues surrounding the ocean, the life within it, and its relationship to humans. The online guide also includes a searchable database of The Ocean Report, background information on the ocean and the creatures living in it, and environmental threats to the ocean. Discussion questions and activity ideas, based on the science curriculum standards of the National Science Teachers Association, are included in addition to a list of print, Internet, and multimedia resources for extended research.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Classroom Courtroom

Turn your classroom into a courtroom with *Jury Trials in the Classroom.* Describing an exciting way to teach

students about the judicial system, this book provides guides that put Hansel and Gretel on trial as well as Jack and Jill. The book also includes the trials of real people such as John Wilkes Booth. Full of resources like fact lists, affidavits, and directions on how to give effective opening and closing statements, this book by Betty M. See provides a great opportunity for students to interact with each other while learning about the law. $21.95 from Dandy Lion Publications. Call 800/776-8032 to order.

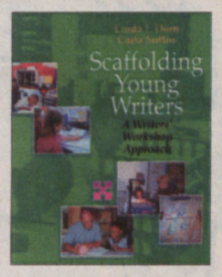
The Adventures of Tom Mouse

Tom Mouse, a brave little rodent, is on his way to Chicago on a train.

Scared at the big world facing him, he relies on the stars as his friends, until he meets Ms. Powers. He eats Ms. Powers' carrots and molasses cookies, but when he is discovered, Ms. Powers' does not scream or chase him with a broom. Instead, she becomes friends with the little guy. Tom Mouse becomes her travel partner, and in the process he learns that finding a good friend is just the thing he needs to explore the exciting world around him. *Tom Mouse*, by Ursula K. Le Guin, is available from Roaring Book Press for $22.90. Call 800/462-4703 to order.

Learning the Write Way

Writing is often one of the hardest things for teachers to assess. With *Scaffolding Young Writers*, by Linda J. Dorn and Carla Soffos, you can



learn how to more effectively teach and evaluate writing. Using real-life writing samples and demonstrations, the book goes through how children first become writers, the three models of writing, and how to set up writing workshops at your school. The book also helps you design productive mini-lessons on writing. $15 from Stenhouse Publishers. To order visit www.stenhouse.com.

Play-Doh Projects

Play-Doh is back! You surely remember the colorful clay that was used to make things like snakes and cookies. Well, with *Play-Doh Art Projects* and *Play-Doh Animal Fun* by Kathy Ross, you and your stu-

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*Limit one per household.

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Resources

dents can get your creative juices stirring by making things like hermit crabs, rattlesnakes, designer stationery, or a fabergé-style egg. $24.40 each from Millbrook Press. Call 800/462-4703.

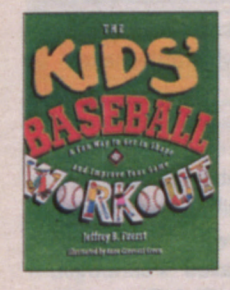
Exploring Nature

The quick, imaginative science experiments for children featured in *Six-Minute Nature Experiments*

vividly demonstrate concepts such as gravity, evaporation, friction, density and absorption. Simple household materials are used to compare the weight of popped or unpopped popcorn, to find out where rainwater goes, and to discover whether shallow or deep puddles dry more quickly. Other experiments in this book by Faith Hickman Brynie include checking out how to prepare frozen yogurt, make music, create abstract paintings, and race toy cars, as well as how gardens grow. $10.95 from Sterling Publishing. To order call 800/805-5489 or visit www.sterlingpub.com.

Starting Spring Training

It's springtime, and that means it's time for baseball. Before your students go out on the field, you may want to check out *The Kids' Baseball Workout*. Written by Jeffrey B. Fuerst, this book helps kids improve their game while having fun. Avoiding the same old drills, the book teaches children how to hit with power, improve their average, and condition their bodies and minds. A chapter on baseball games is included so kids can get better at the sport. Full of useful drills, *The Kids' Baseball Workout* is a good resource for parents, coaches, and teachers. $24.90 from Millbrook Press. Call 800/462-4703.



Party Time

It's time to celebrate holidays all across the world! With *Let's Party*, by Mick Manning and Brita Granstrom, you can find out about special days in countries such as Sweden, China, Brazil, and India. See what Carnival's like in Brazil and learn more about Tababata in Japan. Full of colorful illustrations, this book also relates the history of the holiday and includes different activities students can do that go along with the celebration. $15.95 from Big Fish. Call 212/532-7160 to order or go to www.bigfishonline.co.uk.

The Science of Ice

Your students are eating Popsicles® in the heat and the icy treat is dripping everywhere. It's a common occurrence, and it's the perfect place to start teaching kids about ice. With Jim Pipe's *Why Does Ice Melt?*, students can learn about evaporation, what happens when water freezes, and if they can really stop ice from melting.

Students learn by doing different experiments, which help them understand certain concepts. After the experiment, students can read explanations as to how the process

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VBNT0502

Resources

works and learn about one of nature's most vital components. $21.90 from Copper Beech books. Call 800/462-4703 to order.

Looking for Science Fair Ideas?

This book of 100 science fair projects by Glen Vecchione can lead you to your own award-winning exploration of the natural world.

Choose from many projects such as Radio Wave Emissions from Your Computer, Echolocate the Ocean Floor, and Extract DNA from Animal Tissue. Each project includes a list of materials, procedures, results, and explanations along with simple diagrams of experiment setups. *100 Award-Winning Science Fair Projects* emphasizes the scientific method and covers all major areas of science. A metric conversion chart and index are also included. $14.95 from Sterling Publishing. To order call 800/805-5489 or visit www.sterlingpub.com.

Baby Talk

Here is the story of a baby who begins talking—at the age of 4 weeks. Baby George has a large vocabulary and plenty to say. From storyteller Dick King-Smith, author of *Babe: The Gallant Pig, George Speaks* is the hilarious story of a family turned upside-down by an unusually gifted (and demanding) infant. Appropriate for young readers, the book is available for $21.90 from Roaring Book Press. Go to www.millbrookpress.com.

Lewis and Clark Resource Guide

The *Lewis and Clark Educator's Resource Guide* lists, describes, and comments on the primary resources available to educators relating to the Lewis and Clark expedition. This easy-to-use book allows you to quickly review teaching resources through its descriptions of existing Lewis and Clark curricula, activity guides, videos, Web sites, and trunks produced for educator use. $10 from The Watercourse and Project WET. Call 406/994-1917 to order.

ISTE Curriculum Series

The International Society for Technology in Education just published a new book on integrating technology in grades 3 to 5. The extensive book covers technology education in elementary language arts, social studies, math, and science. It includes hundreds of lesson activities and even offers day-by-day and month-by-month activities for students. A great resource for teachers interested in incorporating technology into their lesson plans, this book is offered from the International Society for Technology in Education for $34.95 and can be ordered by calling 800/336-5195.

WEB WINNERS

Building the Human Body From Clay

A new approach to teaching anatomy enlists the sense of touch to instill a deep and lasting understanding of how the human body is organized and how it functions. Having students build 3-D shapes of muscles and organs from clay,

and place them in the correct location on a skeletal model, makes teaching anatomy fun while increasing student comprehension and retention. Step-by-step instructions are posted every week. Go to www.anatomyinclay.com.

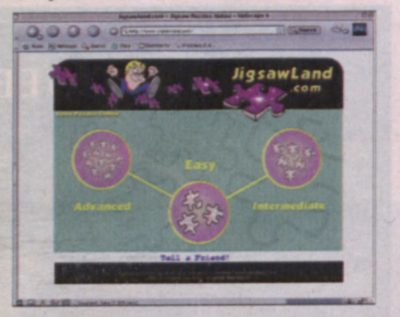
Government Sites Made Easy

If you are about to search for something government related and are dreading the dead ends that come with many government sites, you may want to visit www.firstgov.gov. This extensive site has links to almost anything you could need, from electronically filing your taxes to changing your address. You can even follow a link to file patents and

trademarks. A great place to start if you're not sure where to begin, www.firstgov.gov is easy to navigate and could save you a lot of time.

You Won't Lose the Pieces to this Puzzle

Okay, so you've got some extra time and want to try a Web site that's fun and challenges you a little bit. Check out www.jigsawland.com to try out some cool animal, nature,



and sports puzzles. The pieces are right on the screen, and with three levels, you can try puzzles of varying difficulty.

In Search of the Giant Squid

Scientists have been searching for the elusive giant squid for hundreds of years, most often with no luck. But now's your chance to travel 2000 feet below the ocean's surface in search of this nearly 60-foot creature. On discovery.com, you can learn about the giant squid and discover where it is found and its eating habits. Also, you can see images of the creature and view how the giant squid has been portrayed over

time. Go to http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/giantsquid/giantsquid.html.

Bunches of Biographies

With over 350 biographies chock full of pictures, quotations, and chronologies, www.top-biography.com is a great resource for students who are researching both historical and contemporary figures. Prominent entertainers, significant politicians, and past and present icons can be found on this site.

Dimdima

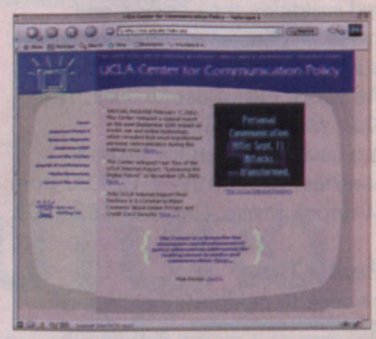
A Web site out of India, www.dimdima.com caters to children by having a connect-the-dots section, brain teasers, and quizzes on recent events. The site also includes a discussion forum for kids and a science lab section. With its multitude of activities, Dimdima.com can keep your students learning for hours.

Animal Land

A playful site full of bright colors and graphics, www.animaland.org offers articles on pets, cartoons, and games. You can also learn about a specific animal or join a poster contest. In the question-and-answer section, students can discover if sharks sleep or why rattlesnakes actually rattle.

I Care Mail

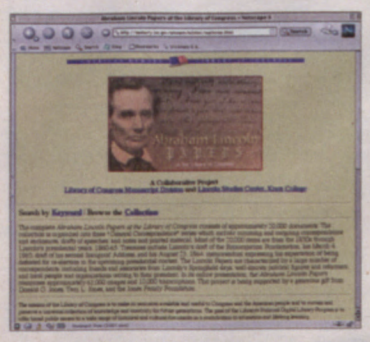
After the September 11 attacks, more than 100 million Americans began using a new form of E-mail communication called "I care mail." A survey by the UCLA Center for Communication Policy recently found that people took time to communicate through E-mail to find out about victims and offer messages of support and concern—communication that normally would not have occurred using written letters or telephone calls. The survey also says that more people relied on television rather than the Internet to



receive information on the attacks. View the survey on ccp.ucla.edu.

All About Abe

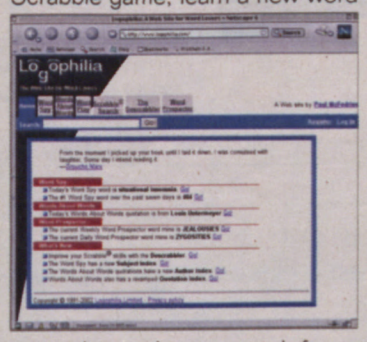
Are your students learning about Lincoln? A Library of Congress Web site now features its collection of Abraham Lincoln's papers, including correspondence and official documents such as the Gettyburg Address and the Emancipation Proclamation. The searchable collection features images of the docu-



ments along with transcriptions of the text. Visit the site at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html.

For Word Lovers

Always losing at Scrabble®? Vocabulary a little rusty? If you want to build a stronger vocabulary and have a sudden urge to learn more words, go to www.logophilia.com. Here, you can get help with your Scrabble game, learn a new word



every day, and even search for specific quotes. Some sections of the site require registration, but even a brief visit will help you wow people with your new, savvy vocabulary.

Enter Starfleet Academy

Join Star Trek's Starfleet Academy and see what it's like to compete with fellow cadets to make scientific discoveries. You can choose to be a Star Trek character, use environmental programs in the Holodeck, and investigate life forms using a Tricorder. Collect discovery cards to

increase your rank, and once you've completed all the experiments, you can graduate as an ensign. Go to http://adventure.tryscience.org/discoverintro.html to begin your work at the academy.

Still Going Strong

Weekly Reader is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. The *Weekly Reader* Web site at www.weekly reader.com complements each *Weekly Reader* magazine with news updates, polls,

contests, games, and more. Last year, *Weekly Reader* moved its pen pal program to the Internet when it launched www.weeklyreader.com/writingpals. Visit the site to join the more than 2,000 teachers and 50,000 students around the world connected through this program.

Solar System Simulator

Be your own tour guide of the solar system with the solar system simulator, a site that allows you to pinpoint certain planets and view them

from different angles. See planets from several spacecrafts and get a color image of the planet you chose. You can also see maps of the planets and explore their surfaces. Go to http://space.jpl.nasa.gov/.

Kids in the House

The U.S. House of Representatives and the Office of the Clerk introduce a new Web site geared toward showing students how laws are

made, who the U.S. House members are, and the role of various committees. Helpful to teachers and parents, the site also recommends lesson plans, educational resources, and links to other government Web sites. Learn about the House at http://clerkkids.house.gov/.

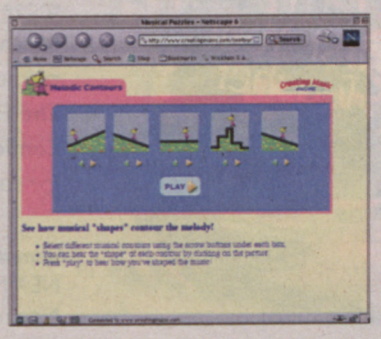
Comparing Costs

In 1803, it cost the United States $15 million to buy the Louisiana Territory. Ever wonder how much that land would cost today? With PBS Teacher Source's Mathline®, kids can calculate prices today of

things that were purchased in the 19th century. Each activity gives detailed directions as to how to convert dollar amounts to today's value, and a separate PDF file provides the answers. Visit www.pbs.org/teachersource/mathline/concepts/president/activity1.shtm to start comparing costs.

Musical Melodies

Music teachers looking for a good Web site where children can create their own music should visit www.



creatingmusic.com/contours/index.html. Students can create different musical contours by choosing different shapes and then listen to how they shaped a certain piece of music.

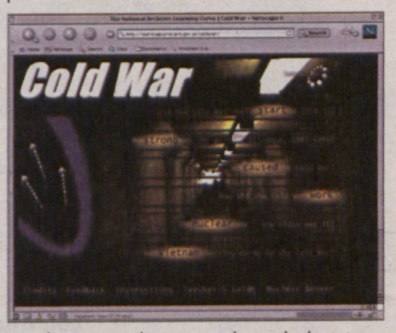
Country Studies

More than 100 countries make up the country studies part of the Library of Congress Web site. The studies contain political, social,

economic, and national security information as well as how other institutions within the country function. Visit the site at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html for an easy-to-navigate way to begin research on a country.

Examining the Cold War

When did the Cold War really start? A British Web site, located at http://learningcurve.pro.gov.uk/coldwar, provides historical sources, case



studies, timelines, and worksheets to allow students to research and examine the beginnings and progression of the Cold War. A teacher's guide is also included.

Just for Teachers

With articles galore on the latest in K-12 education, http://teachers.net/gazette has a wide range of material by educators for educators. Read about the latest in research on education, and, on a lighter note, read teachers' responses to questions such as what the strangest thing

brought in for show and tell was. The site, updated monthly, has columns, crafts, recipes, and opinion pieces as well as tips for getting things you write published.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Looking Ahead

Look for the August 2002 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*, featuring an NEA-sponsored Back to School section. Articles such as "The Teacher Who Changed My Life" will make you proud with stories from celebrities and business and political leaders about the teacher who had the most profound impact on them. And profiles of students who have beaten the odds to achieve spectacular success will warm your heart. Look for the special section in mid-July when the issue hits the newsstands!

Is there a new teacher in the family?

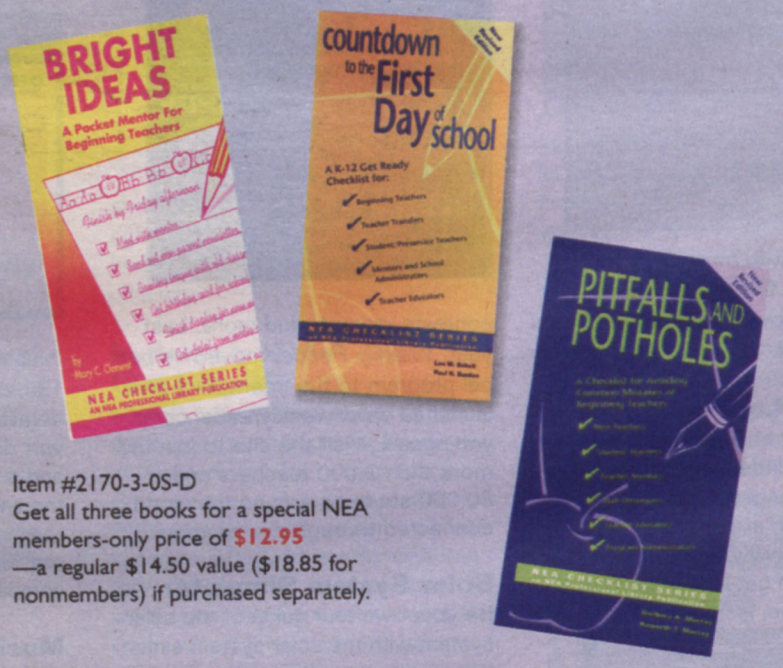
Teaching is hereditary—it tends to run in families. If you have a son or daughter—or even a niece or nephew—who's graduating from student teaching to the real thing, consider a graduation gift befitting the occasion. **The NEA Professional Library** has the gifts you need to help get all the graduates on your list off to a great start!

Your daughter will be heading up her own classroom in a few months. Give her a leg up with our best-selling Graduation Gift Pack, featuring three great handbooks for teaching rookies.

Countdown to the First Day of School lays out a step-by-step checklist that'll have her poised and ready to succeed the day the school doors open.

Pitfalls and Potholes: A Checklist for Avoiding Common Mistakes of Beginning Teachers offers the sensible strategies she'll never read in any textbook.

Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers provides the sort of usable advice that every teacher needs and few teachers get.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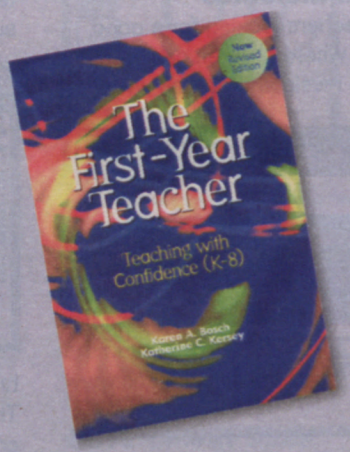

Your son will have his hands full those first few weeks of school, trying to put all he learned in class into practice. Give him a wealth of knowledge from experienced teachers with **The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8)**. He'll learn proven strategies for surviving those critical first weeks of school.

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DIVERSITY Calendar

May

May 5—Children's Day
This holiday celebrates the healthy growth and happiness of children. A national holiday in Japan since 1948, it is now celebrated all around the world. Visit http://familycrafts.about.com/library/spdays/blmaydays00.htm and click on Children's Day to learn more.

May 7—National Teacher Day
A day to recognize and honor teachers all across the country, National Teacher Day is sponsored by the National Education Association and part of Teacher Appreciation Week, May 5-11. Call 202/822-7200 for more information or go to www.nea.org/teachday/.

May 14—Beginning of the Lewis and Clark Expedition
Learn more about this monumental expedition and teach your students about Lewis and Clark's search for new lands, rivers, and people. Visit www.pbs.org/lewisandclark.

May 17—Anniversary of School Desegregation Hearing
On this date in 1954, racial segregation in school was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in Brown v. Topeka Board of Education. Learn more about the case by going to www.pbs.org/jefferson/enlight/brown.htm.

may

June

June 2—Republic Day
Italy celebrates this day in 1946 when the country selected a Republican government instead of a return to a monarchy.

June 9—Race Unity Day
Sponsored by members of the Bahai faith to promote racial harmony and understanding, it also a day to reflect on racial prejudice in the world. Visit www.commonlink.com/~chiron_rising/race/race.unity.day.html.

June 12—Anne Frank's Birthday
Honor the young German Jewish girl who lived in hiding from the Nazis for two years. Go to www.annefrank.com to learn more.

June 27—Helen Keller's Birthday
Although blind and deaf, Keller graduated from college with honors and became a crusader for better treatment of people with disabilities. Honor her accomplishments on this day and learn more about her life at www.rnib.org.uk/wesupply/fctsheet/keller.htm.

june

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in the Light Lane

When Your Water Breaks

It was 105 degrees on our school's year-round playground in Palm Springs. When my morning recess duty came to a close, I was standing by the water fountain as two fifth grade girls got in line for a drink.

Due to some recent plumbing problems in my own fourth grade classroom, I was not surprised when one of the girls suddenly looked up at me from her drink and said, "Mrs. Whitcomb's water broke." I casually responded, "Well, I'm sorry to hear that. It's no wonder you girls are so thirsty."

A puzzled glance from the girls greeted me as I continued, "Maybe Mr. Richard [our custodian] can fix it." Their eyes grew wide and their mouths gaped open as it suddenly dawned on me: Their teacher, Mrs. Whitcomb, hadn't been in school for several weeks. She was out on maternity leave.

Doug Messersmith
Palm Springs, California

My Language Arts class finished a unit on prepositional phrases, and students had to write their own. One student wrote, "The alligator chased the teacher with a big mouth."

Merna McGill
Bettendorf, Iowa

Knowing how excited my grandaughter had been to start kindergarten, I called her to see how her first week at school had gone. Imagine my amazement to find out that she was very nonchalant about school.

I asked her about her teacher, and she said she was fine. I asked her about the other girls and boys and if she had made any friends. She said yes.

"So why do you not care about school now? You were dying to go all summer," I inquired. Her answer: "I've been going a week now and I still can't read."

What high expectations of us teachers students have!

Marilyn McCormick
Bartlett, Tennessee

Last spring, our school had a tree-planting project to improve the playgrounds. Every class planted a tree. (My second graders planted their tree with considerable help from our fifth grade students). We wrote stories about our trees and named them.

When it was our turn to watch the fifth graders plant our tree, my second graders became very excited. One student came up to me and said, "Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Brown! Guess what they put in the hole with the tree? They put in cow remover!" I needed to spend the next few minutes explaining the pronunciation of the word "manure." Another unforgettable teaching moment.

Anne Brown
Aurora, Colorado

Every year the last question on my Algebra I final exam is: How do you spell "Mrs. Sidloski"?

A) Mrs. Sidloski
B) Mrs. Sidlowski
C) Mrs. Sidloskey
D) Mrs. Sidloskie

Several students will come up to my desk and ask if this is a trick question. I tell them, no, it is a really *easy* question. Two or three students will get it wrong in each class. But the best response so far is from the young man who came up to me this year and secretively said, "Mrs. Sidloski, did you forget that your name is up on the bulletin board in front of the room?"

Tracie Sidloski
Westlake, Ohio

My brother and I are science educators and use every opportunity to teach valuable science information. While driving one afternoon, my brother saw a windmill used to generate electricity and pointed it out to his sons.

Both boys were concentrating intensely on their electronic games and seemed a bit irritated by the distraction.

While the younger boy ignored the comment, his 12-year-old brother looked up at the mill, scanned the vast plains of central Nebraska with grasses swaying rhythmically in the wind, and asked, "Why do we need machines that make wind? Seems to me that there's enough wind in the world."

Pamela Galus
Omaha, Nebraska

I recently received my students' report cards back. As I took each card out, I read each response in the "parent comments" closely. I was tickled to read that one parent's comment was, "We love you son, keep up the good work!"

Patria Slaughter
DeLand, Florida

"This is a parent of a student in your science class. I'd like to discuss my son's grade. Is this a good time?"

Got Laughs?

● Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," NEA Today, 1201 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036. Fax: 202/822-7206. Send E-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

● Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your E-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the new "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an E-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).

Talk About DNA

Each year in my seventh grade life science class students do a DNA extraction lab. After the experiment is completed, we have a debriefing session where students can express their opinions about the lab. This year, after the usual enthusiastic comments of "awesome," "really neat," and "the best lab so far," one of the quieter female students perked up and said, "I felt just like God."

Lee Grover
West Newbury, Massachusetts

While discussing study skills with my sixth grade class, we were naming people we could go to for help if we needed advice on such issues as good sleep habits and proper diet. When the topic switched to exercise, one energetic student was waving her hand to be called upon.

"Okay," I said, "Who could help us with advice about exercise?" With a confident smile, she proudly declared, "An exorcist!"

Vicki Campbell
Beavercreek, Ohio

My brother, who lives in Wyoming, was visiting my kindergarten class. He helped us locate Wyoming on the map by telling students that Wyoming is shaped like a square. Several days later, I asked my class if they remembered where my brother lived. A boy proudly raised his hand, saying, "He lives in a square."

Phyllis Levin
Kissimmee, Florida

Last week I gave a quiz after the show "Newsdepth" and asked, "Who does the United States believe ordered the 9/11 attack?" Some of the answers I got:

- Bennloten
- Osama Binladan
- Osma Bin Ladin
- Bilaten
- Allsonva bullaton
- Son of bin laden
- Asalven Aladen
- Osula binlatan
- Oson Bin Landen
- Bin Laden
- Alsurva binladen
- Osominbinlatin, AND
- O'Some of Binladan (from an Irish family, no doubt).

Amy Bogan
Wellington, Ohio

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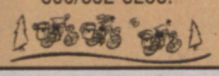

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*An NEA Personal Loan may not be used solely to pay off or pay down this or any other MBNA account.

**MBNA will set your Annual Percentage Rate (APR) between 9.99% and 17.99% based on your creditworthiness. The APR is not guaranteed and may change; however, any APR change will not affect any balance on your account at the time of the change. In most cases, a change in the APR will restart your repayment term and change your minimum monthly payment. There is a 1% transaction fee for all advances on the account, including access checks, direct deposits and balance transfers (fee: minimum $2; maximum $10).

†You will automatically be considered for the loan amount requested. Receipt of this amount, however, is contingent upon an adequate level of income and creditworthiness.

ΔMBNA will restart your initial monthly repayment term and recalculate your monthly payment each time you reaccess your line of credit.

The NEA is not involved in the credit application process. All applications are subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America Bank N.A. This account is issued and administered by MBNA America Bank, N.A.

The NEA Personal Loan has been developed for NEA members and their families only. Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children. If a member decides not to renew membership, that person and his/her family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates and fees offered through the NEA Personal Loan Program. If eligible, a replacement loan may be offered.

MBNA and MBNA America are federally registered service marks of MBNA America Bank, N.A., P.O. Box 15133, Wilmington, DE 19885-5133.

The NEA Personal Loan is a service mark of NEA's Member Benefits Corporation and a financial service provided by MBNA America, used pursuant to license.

Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.

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RETAILER: You are authorized to act as our agent to redeem this coupon and we shall reimburse you at face value plus 8¢ handling in accordance with our redemption policy. Copies available upon request. Offer void if copied and where prohibited, taxed or otherwise restricted. Cash value 1/100¢. Mail to: Beiersdorf Inc, PO Box 880504, El Paso, TX 88588-0504.

CONSUMER: Coupon good on the purchase of any Futuro Hosiery or Socks. Limit one coupon per item purchased. Any other use constitutes fraud. Not good with any other special offer. Consumer must pay sales tax.

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